

NOVEMBER 2009

The American Conservative

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IRAQ IS THE PITS

I read your article, "Burn Victims" (Kelley Beaucar Vlahos, October) and wanted to thank you for bringing attention to the burn-pit problem.

I was deployed to Balad, Iraq from 2008 to 2009 and was healthy and fit prior to the deployment. Toward the end, I developed breathing problems. Medical personnel at Balad suggested I visit the VA hospital when I got stateside if my breathing didn't improve after I got out of the bad environmental conditions at the air base.

When I got home, I was hospitalized for two respiratory attacks while I was going through medical screening. During the second attack, I stopped breathing and was mechanically ventilated. I was diagnosed with a giant bulla in my right lung. On Aug. 17, I underwent surgery to have the entire upper right lobe of my lung removed. I'm in recovery now and have significantly decreased lung function.

I am on medical disability leave from my civilian job. (I am a National Guard soldier, not an active-duty soldier. I was placed back on active duty by the Army because a line-of-duty injury report while I was in Balad states clearly that the injury to my lung occurred while there on active duty.) I'm facing long-term permanent disabilities, which will likely result in the loss of my military career—I have one year to retirement—and possibly the loss of my civilian job.

I should note that I do not smoke, the leading cause of giant bullae. Another cause is working or living with high levels of pollution.

SGT. LEE JELLISON
B Company 248th ASB
Waterloo, Iowa

WELL PLAYED

Freddy Gray's article, "Coming Up Aces" (October) was one of the best written and most thoroughly researched articles

I've read on the topic, and I say that as a five-year veteran of the poker media.

It's obvious that Mr. Gray wrote the article from an opposing point of view compared to my own, but it was remarkably free from bias. If anything, I feel like he skimmed over the concerns of social conservatives while digging into poker's arguments in depth—something I never expected from a conservative magazine.

While I disagree with social conservatives on a lot of issues, I respect people like Freddy Gray who can look at all sides of the issue, come to an informed decision that differs from mine, and make their arguments logically. Politics isn't mathematics, and there is rarely a correct answer, just different priorities for people with different points of view.

I found one error in the article, but it's relatively minor and doesn't affect the arguments. The anti-gaming measure attached to the 2006 SAFE Port Act is called the UIGEA (Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act) and not the UIGA.

B.J. NEMETH
Via e-mail

SUNSHINE PATRIOTS

In "The Right Fights Back" (October), Pat Buchanan fails to ask an important question. Where were these so-called conservative townhall protesters when the parched Tree of Liberty could have used watering with the vital fluids of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney? Where were they when an illegal war was launched, when torture, kidnapping, and domestic spying were being adopted and the fourth, fifth, sixth, and eighth amendments were being jettisoned to support that war and suppress criticism? Where were they when Bush and Paulson bailed out Wall Street by paying off the gambling debts of AIG?

Mr. Buchanan often confuses Republicans with real conservatives. Republicans—unlike real conservatives who

want a noninterventionist foreign policy, true capitalism, and an expansion of liberties at home—only cry out for smaller government when they are not in power.

If Republicans now want to stomp their feet and hold their breath instead of proposing solutions, they will be left out of any debate. When there is to be real discussion, one doesn't show up with a gun and a megaphone; one shows up with ideas. Good ideas and not ranting lunatics have always defined conservatism.

JOHN DENTE
Wilmington, Del.

DOWN UNDERACHIEVING

Sadly, Reid Buckley's analysis of the appalling state of illiteracy among high-school and university students ("The Write Stuff," September) is mirrored in Australian educational institutions.

After 23 years of high-school teaching, I quit in 1992. By that time, my students were assuring me I was the only teacher who not only taught essay-writing techniques, but read and marked their essays. I admit to being skeptical and once inquired, "But what about your English teachers? What do you do in English?" The answer was, "We discuss things."

Some university staff members have resigned in disgust when told to pass students no matter what the abysmal standard of prescribed work; others cling to tenure and blame the caliber of students. The standards are even worse now, and the attitude of students far more belligerent to anyone who attempts to challenge their work.

ANGELA MENDE
New South Wales, Australia

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[POLITICS]

VOTE AGAINST THE OTHER GUY

Congressional Republicans lost over 40 seats between 2006 and 2008, a clear repudiation of the Bush years. But now Democrats, who won their majority on the back of Karl Rove's party-building efforts—which party was he trying to build, exactly?—are finding that victory comes with a dangerous companion: responsibility.

So far, Barack Obama's party has not been up to the test. The president's plans for overhauling healthcare bogged down before Congress's summer recess, as "tea party" tax protests and townhall revolts broke out across the country. Americans don't want Republican wars, but are also chary of massive expansions of the welfare state during the worst economy since the Great Depression.

Now Blue Dog Democrats are caught in the same pincer that Republicans faced under Bush: they have a choice between their president's grandiose plans and their constituents' skepticism. *TAC* contributing editor Jim Antle reminds those (relatively) conservative Democrats who picked up Republican seats in the last two elections what happened to one-term Pennsylvania Democrat Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky in 1994. Triple-M's deciding vote for Clinton's first tax-raising budget cost her reelection. "She was joined by dozens of other Democrats representing districts where raising taxes gets you a free ticket to the private sector rather than a Profile in Courage Award," Antle notes. The Margolies-Mezvinksys of today are getting increasingly antsy with Obama, Reid, and Pelosi—leaders well to the left of the nation's center of gravity.

But Republicans shouldn't celebrate yet. Obama commands approval numbers over 50 percent. And while Congress faces a Bush-like 62 percent disapproval rating, House Democrats still hold a 4-



point "generic ballot" edge. Just as Democrats cannot rely on public disgust with the GOP to keep them in power, Republicans cannot depend on a backlash against the Democrats to return them to majority status. Republicans will have to stop bawling about socialism and offer an alternative to Bush and Obama alike—limits on profligate government at home and nation-building abroad.

[WAR]

B ALL U KAN B

"I face difficulties," admits Shahidullah Ahmadi, an illiterate recruited into the logistics section of the Afghan National Army. "If someone calls me and tells to go somewhere, I can't read the street signs."

Ahmadi is not the only one. According to a new report, 90 percent of the Afghan army cannot read. (Presumably, the smarter Afghans know that signing up for a losing fight against the Taliban isn't a good career move.)

This startling revelation should trouble our would-be nation builders. How can Afghan Security Forces be expected to take charge of their democratic destiny if they can't decipher the letters of the Pashto alphabet?

But Washington's internationalists are unfazed. If the locals lack education, all

the more reason for a "civilian surge" to enlighten them. Private contractor Palau Electronics of Orlando, Florida has been brought in to make 50 percent of the Afghan troops "functionally literate." Easier said than done. "They taught me a lot of things," said one Palau alum, Rosey Khan. "But I've forgotten them." Isn't it time America learned a lesson instead?

[MEDIA]

BLAME RON PAUL FIRST

Dana Goldstein of *The Daily Beast* calls this summer's grassroots protests "The Revenge of Ron Paul's Army." "Three-quarters of the way through 2009, it is fringy Ron Paul, more so than John McCain ... whose ideology is setting the conservative agenda. Even without the direct influence of their titular leader, Paul's campaign army is marching on, mobilizing by intense opposition to health-care reform."

Goldstein is wrong, but in an interesting way. Establishment Republicans—who are pro-war and didn't have much problem with No Child Left Behind or Bush's prescription-drug scheme—are now selling themselves as born-again constitutionalists. This is nothing new: every time the GOP is out of power, the party of Nixon and Bush reincarnates as

the party of Robert Taft and Barry Goldwater. In the last presidential election, while Republicans still clung to the White House, only Paul dared campaign against big GOP government as well as big Democratic government. Today, of course, Republicans can assail federal socialism without having to answer for the budget-busting, Constitution-shredding ways of their man in the Oval Office.

What Goldstein is witnessing owes less to the Ron Paul movement—with its antiwar and anti-Federal Reserve emphases—than to the bizarre, late-campaign rallies of John McCain, where partisan mobs brayed that Obama was a Muslim, a Kenyan, a commie. Liberals like Goldstein might be forgiven for not remembering Republican appropriations of small-government rhetoric in decades past, but can't they at least recall last November?

Their memory is selective because the truth doesn't fit their ideology: Paul has his zealous supporters, but his political program has much more substance than denunciations of putative socialists. To the Left, the idea of a principled conservative—one who holds Republicans and Democrats to the same standard—is unthinkable. Claming that Paul's supporters are behind the often comical, occasionally nasty protests is a way to discredit the one Republican who stands for something different.

[CULTURE]

ONCE MORE WITH FEELING

It has become an American rite, as expected as fireworks on the Fourth, for a public figure caught acting like himself to apologize. Then to apologize again. And perhaps again, each time piling on more abject adjectives. If the mass mood doesn't relent, he'll be hustled off to rehab or on to "Oprah" to discuss the childhood trauma that caused him to behave so out of character (even though he didn't particularly display any in the first place).

We've recently been treated to three ritual humiliations. After Serena Williams berated a line judge at the U.S. Open, she was forced to serve up a variety of apologies. Her penance tour continues. Then came pampered songstress Taylor Swift, who pulled up to the Video Music Awards in a horse-drawn Cinderella coach only to have her magical night eclipsed by Kanye West's ego. Stars rushed to defend the stricken ingénue. President Obama pronounced judgment. A disoriented West wept in primetime and promised to take time off to navel-gaze further.

Then there's the South Carolina congressman who launched a fetching line of "You Lie!" accessories by heckling the president during his speech to a joint session of Congress. Joe Wilson called the White House to apologize, then called conservative radio-show hosts to say that he wasn't all that sorry. Stung by his lack of contrition, the House delivered an official rebuke. (Had a Democrat interrupted President Bush's serial deceptions leading up to the Iraq War, would the GOP have lauded his courage or Nancy Pelosi bewailed his desecration of her chamber? Not a chance.)

Notable in all of these cases: no one was truly damaged. Brash people displayed their bad manners. A collective frown would have sufficed, but instead we got week-long media events. Maybe seeing the mighty grovel makes us feel superior. When else would Hollywood be able to lecture about modesty or Congress about restraint? Maybe we like letting some air out of the idols we've over-inflated, silly though it is to rule on the sincerity of their apologies when their public personae are already synthetic.

Whatever the cause, the whole spectacle—posed indignation followed by forced apology—is a farce from both sides. It would be decent entertainment if it didn't drain energy from legitimate public outrage and make repentance cheap. ■

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[spies, lies, and audiotape]

Who's Afraid of Sibel Edmonds?

The gagged whistleblower goes on the record.

SIBEL EDMONDS has a story to tell. She went to work as a Turkish and Farsi translator for the FBI five days after 9/11. Part of her job was to translate and transcribe recordings of conversations between suspected Turkish intelligence agents and their American contacts. She was fired from the FBI in April 2002 after she raised concerns that one of the translators in her section was a member of a Turkish organization that was under investigation for bribing senior government officials and members of Congress, drug trafficking, illegal weapons sales, money laundering, and nuclear proliferation. She appealed her termination, but was more alarmed that no effort was being made to address the corruption that she had been monitoring.

A Department of Justice inspector general's report called Edmonds's allegations "credible," "serious," and "warrant[ing] a thorough and careful review by the FBI." Ranking Senate Judiciary Committee members Pat Leahy (D-Vt.) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) have backed her publicly. "60 Minutes" launched an investigation of her claims and found them believable. No one has ever disproved any of Edmonds's revelations, which she says can be verified by FBI investigative files.

John Ashcroft's Justice Department confirmed Edmonds's veracity in a backhanded way by twice invoking the dubious State Secrets Privilege so she could not tell what she knows. The ACLU has

called her "the most gagged person in the history of the United States of America."

But on Aug. 8, she was finally able to testify under oath in a court case filed in Ohio and agreed to an interview with *The American Conservative* based on that testimony. What follows is her own account of what some consider the most incredible tale of corruption and influence peddling in recent times. As Sibel herself puts it, "If this were written up as a novel, no one would believe it."

PHILIP GIRALDI: We were very interested to learn of your four-hour deposition in the case involving allegations that Congresswoman Jean Schmidt accepted money from the Turkish government in return for political favors. You provided many names and details for the first time on the record and swore an oath confirming that the deposition was true.

Basically, you map out a corruption scheme involving U.S. government employees and members of Congress and agents of foreign governments. These agents were able to obtain information that was either used directly by those foreign governments or sold to third parties, with the proceeds often used as bribes to breed further corruption. Let's start with the first government official you identified, Marc Grossman, then the third highest-ranking official at the State Department.

SIBEL EDMONDS: During my work with the FBI, one of the major operational files that I was transcribing and translating started in late 1996 and continued until 2002, when I left the Bureau. Because the FBI had had no Turkish translators, these files were archived, but were considered to be very important operations. As part of the background, I was briefed about why these operations had been initiated and who the targets were.

Grossman became a person of interest early on in the investigative file while he was the U.S. ambassador to Turkey [1994-97], when he became personally involved with operatives both from the Turkish government and from suspected criminal groups. He also had suspicious contact with a number of official and non-official Israelis. Grossman was removed from Turkey short of tour during a scandal referred to as "Susurluk" by the media. It involved a number of high-level criminals as well as senior army and intelligence officers with whom he had been in contact.

Another individual who was working for Grossman, Air Force Major Douglas Dickerson, was also removed from Turkey and sent to Germany. After he and his Turkish wife Can returned to the U.S., he went to work for Douglas Feith and she was hired as an FBI Turkish translator. My complaints about her connection to Turkish lobbying groups led to my eventual firing.

Grossman and Dickerson had to

leave the country because a big investigation had started in Turkey. Special prosecutors were appointed, and the case was headlined in England, Germany, Italy, and in some of the Balkan countries because the criminal groups were found to be active in all those places. A leading figure in the scandal, Mehmet Eymür, led a major paramilitary group for the Turkish intelligence service. To keep him from testifying, Eymür was sent by the Turkish government to the United States, where he worked for eight months as head of intelligence at the Turkish Embassy in Washington. He later became a U.S. citizen and now lives in McLean, Virginia. The central figure in this scandal was Abdullah Catli. In 1989, while “most wanted” by Interpol, he came to the U.S., was granted residency, and settled in Chicago, where he continued to conduct his operations until 1996.

GIRALDI: So Grossman at this point comes back to the United States. He’s rewarded with the third-highest position at the State Department, and he allegedly uses this position to do favors for “Turkish interests”—both for the Turkish government and for possible criminal interests. Sometimes, the two converge. The FBI is aware of his activities and is listening to his phone calls. When someone who is Turkish calls Grossman, the FBI monitors that individual’s phone calls, and when the Turk calls a friend who is a Pakistani or an Egyptian or a Saudi, they monitor all those contacts, widening the net.

EDMONDS: Correct.

GIRALDI: And Grossman received money as a result. In one case, you said that a State Department colleague went to pick up a bag of money...

EDMONDS: \$14,000

GIRALDI: What kind of information was Grossman giving to foreign countries? Did he give assistance to foreign individuals penetrating U.S. government labs and defense installations as has been reported? It’s also been reported that he was the conduit to a group of congressmen who become, in a sense, the targets to be recruited as “agents of influence.”

EDMONDS: Yes, that’s correct. Grossman assisted his Turkish and Israeli contacts directly, and he also facilitated access to members of Congress who might be inclined to help for reasons of their own or could be bribed into cooperation. The top person obtaining classified information was Congressman Tom Lantos. A Lantos associate, Alan Makovsky worked very closely with Dr. Sabri Sayari in Georgetown University, who is widely believed to be a Turkish spy. Lantos would give Makovsky highly classified policy-related documents obtained during defense briefings for passage to Israel because Makovsky was also working for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

GIRALDI: Makovsky is now working for the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, a pro-Israeli think tank.

EDMONDS: Yes. Lantos was at the time probably the most outspoken supporter of Israel in Congress. AIPAC would take out the information from Lantos that was relevant to Israel, and they would give the rest of it to their Turkish associates. The Turks would go through the leftovers, take what they wanted, and then try to sell the rest. If there were something relevant to Pakistan, they would contact the ISI officer at the embassy and say, “We’ve got this and this, let’s sit down and talk.” And then they would sell it to the Pakistanis.

GIRALDI: ISI—Pakistani intelligence—has been linked to the Pakistani nuclear proliferation program as well as to al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

So the FBI was monitoring these connections going from a congressman to a congressman’s assistant to a foreign individual who is connected with intelligence to other intelligence people who are located at different embassies in Washington. And all of this information is in an FBI file somewhere?

EDMONDS: Two sets of FBI files, but the AIPAC-related files and the Turkish files ended up converging in one. The FBI agents believed that they were looking at the same operation. It didn’t start with AIPAC originally. It started with the Israeli Embassy. The original targets were intelligence officers under diplomatic cover in the Turkish Embassy and the Israeli Embassy. It was those contacts that led to the American Turkish Council and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations and then to AIPAC fronting for the Israelis. It moved forward from there.

GIRALDI: So the FBI was monitoring people from the Israeli Embassy and the Turkish Embassy and one, might presume, the Pakistani Embassy as well?

EDMONDS: They were the secondary target. They got leftovers from the Turks and Israelis. The FBI would intercept communications to try to identify who the diplomatic target’s intelligence chief was, but then, in addition to that, there are individuals there, maybe the military attaché, who had their own contacts who were operating independently of others in the embassy.

GIRALDI: So the network starts with a person like Grossman in the State Department providing information that enables Turkish and Israeli intelligence

officers to have access to people in Congress, who then provide classified information that winds up in the foreign embassies?

EDMONDS: Absolutely. And we also had Pentagon officials doing the same thing. We were looking at Richard Perle and Douglas Feith. They had a list of individuals in the Pentagon broken down by access to certain types of information. Some of them would be policy related, some of them would be weapons-technology related, some of them would be nuclear-related. Perle and Feith would provide the names of those Americans, officials in the Pentagon, to Grossman, together with highly sensitive personal information: this person is a closet gay; this person has a chronic gambling issue; this person is an alcoholic. The files on the American targets would contain things like the size of their mortgages or whether they were going through divorces. One Air Force major I remember was going through a really nasty divorce and a child custody fight. They detailed all different kinds of vulnerabilities.

GIRALDI: So they had access to their personnel files and also their security files and were illegally accessing this kind of information to give to foreign agents who exploited the vulnerabilities of these people to recruit them as sources of information?

EDMONDS: Yes. Some of those individuals on the list were also working for the RAND Corporation. RAND ended up becoming one of the prime targets for these foreign agents.

GIRALDI: RAND does highly classified research for the U.S. government. So they were setting up these people for recruitment as agents or as agents of influence?

EDMONDS: Yes, and the RAND sources would be paid peanuts compared to what the information was worth when it was sold if it was not immediately useful for Turkey or Israel. They also had sources who were working in some midwestern Air Force bases. The sources would provide the information on CD's and DVD's. In one case, for example, a Turkish military attaché got the disc and discovered that it was something really important, so he offered it to the Pakistani ISI person at the embassy, but the price was too high. Then a Turkish contact in Chicago said he knew two Saudi businessmen in Detroit who would be very interested in this information, and they would pay the price. So the Turkish military attaché flew to Detroit with his assistant to make the sale.

GIRALDI: We know Grossman was receiving money for services.

EDMONDS: Yes. Sometimes he would give money to the people who were working with him, identified in phone calls on a first-name basis, whether it's a John or a Joe. He also took care of some other people, including his contact at the *New York Times*. Grossman would brag, "We just fax to our people at the *New York Times*. They print it under their names."

GIRALDI: Did Feith and Perle receive any money that you know of?

EDMONDS: No.

GIRALDI: So they were doing favors for other reasons. Both Feith and Perle were lobbyists for Turkey and also were involved with Israel on defense contracts, including some for Northrop Grumman, which Feith represented in Israel.

EDMONDS: They had arrangements with various companies, some of them

members of the American Turkish Council. They had arrangements with Kissinger's group, with Northrop Grumman, with former secretary of state James Baker's group, and also with former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft.

The monitoring of the Turks picked up contacts with Feith, Wolfowitz, and Perle in the summer of 2001, four months before 9/11. They were discussing with the Turkish ambassador in Washington an arrangement whereby the U.S. would invade Iraq and divide the country. The UK would take the south, the rest would go to the U.S. They were negotiating what Turkey required in exchange for allowing an attack from Turkish soil. The Turks were very supportive, but wanted a three-part division of Iraq to include their own occupation of the Kurdish region. The three Defense Department officials said that would be more than they could agree to, but they continued daily communications to the ambassador and his defense attaché in an attempt to convince them to help.

Meanwhile Scowcroft, who was also the chairman of the American Turkish Council, Baker, Richard Armitage, and Grossman began negotiating separately for a possible Turkish protectorate. Nothing was decided, and then 9/11 took place.

Scowcroft was all for invading Iraq in 2001 and even wrote a paper for the Pentagon explaining why the Turkish northern front would be essential. I know Scowcroft came off as a hero to some for saying he was against the war, but he was very much for it until his client's conditions were not met by the Bush administration.

GIRALDI: Armitage was deputy secretary of state at the time Scowcroft and Baker were running their own consulting firms that were doing business with Turkey. Grossman had just become

undersecretary, third in the State hierarchy behind Armitage.

You've previously alluded to efforts by Grossman, as well as high-ranking officials at the Pentagon, to place Ph.D. students. Can you describe that in more detail?

EDMONDS: The seeding operation started before Marc Grossman arrived at the State Department. The Turkish agents had a network of Turkish professors in various universities with access to government information. Their top source was a Turkish-born professor of

GIRALDI: This corruption wasn't confined to the State Department and the Pentagon—it infected Congress as well. You've named people like former House Speaker Dennis Hastert, now a registered agent of the Turkish government. In your deposition, you describe the process of breaking foreign-originated contributions into small units, \$200 or less, so that the source didn't have to be reported. Was this the primary means of influencing congressmen, or did foreign agents exploit vulnerabilities to get what they wanted using something like blackmail?

IN EXCHANGE FOR THE INFORMATION THAT THESE STUDENTS WOULD PROVIDE, THEY WOULD BE PAID \$4,000 OR \$5,000. AND THE INFORMATION THAT WAS SOLD TO THE TWO SAUDIS IN DETROIT WENT FOR SOMETHING LIKE \$350,000 OR \$400,000.

nuclear physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was useful because MIT would place a bunch of Ph.D. or graduate-level students in various nuclear facilities like Sandia or Los Alamos, and some of them were able to work for the Air Force. He would provide the list of Ph.D. students who should get these positions. In some cases, the Turkish military attaché would ask that certain students be placed in important positions. And they were not necessarily all Turkish, but the ones they selected had struck deals with the Turkish agents to provide information in return for money. If for some reason they had difficulty getting a security clearance, Grossman would ensure that the State Department would arrange to clear them.

In exchange for the information that these students would provide, they would be paid \$4,000 or \$5,000. And the information that was sold to the two Saudis in Detroit went for something like \$350,000 or \$400,000.

EDMONDS: In early 1997, because of the information that the FBI was getting on the Turkish diplomatic community, the Justice Department had already started to investigate several Republican congressmen. The number-one congressman involved with the Turkish community, both in terms of providing information and doing favors, was Bob Livingston. Number-two after him was Dan Burton, and then he became number-one until Hastert became the speaker of the House. Bill Clinton's attorney general, Janet Reno, was briefed on the investigations, and since they were Republicans, she authorized that they be continued.

Well, as the FBI developed more information, Tom Lantos was added to this list, and then they got a lot on Douglas Feith and Richard Perle and Marc Grossman. At this point, the Justice Department said they wanted the FBI to only focus on Congress, leaving the executive branch people out of it. But the FBI agents involved wanted to con-

tinue pursuing Perle and Feith because the Israeli Embassy was also connected. Then the Monica Lewinsky scandal erupted, and everything was placed on the back burner.

But some of the agents continued to investigate the congressional connection. In 1999, they wiretapped the congressmen directly. (Prior to that point they were getting all their information secondhand through FISA, as their primary targets were foreigners.) The questionably legal wiretap gave the perfect excuse to the Justice Department. As soon as they found out, they refused permission to monitor the congressmen and Grossman as primary targets. But the inquiry was kept alive in Chicago because the FBI office there was pursuing its own investigation. The epicenter of a lot of the foreign espionage activity was Chicago.

GIRALDI: So the investigation stopped in Washington, but continued in Chicago?

EDMONDS: Yes, and in 2000, another representative was added to the list, Jan Schakowsky, the Democratic congresswoman from Illinois. Turkish agents started gathering information on her, and they found out that she was bisexual. So a Turkish agent struck up a relationship with her. When Jan Schakowsky's mother died, the Turkish woman went to the funeral, hoping to exploit her vulnerability. They later were intimate in Schakowsky's townhouse, which had been set up with recording devices and hidden cameras. They needed Schakowsky and her husband Robert Creamer to perform certain illegal operational facilitations for them in Illinois. They already had Hastert, the mayor, and several other Illinois state senators involved. I don't know if Congresswoman Schakowsky ever was actually blackmailed or did anything for the Turkish woman.

GIRALDI: So we have a pattern of corruption starting with government officials providing information to foreigners and helping them make contact with other Americans who had valuable information. Some of these officials, like Marc Grossman, were receiving money directly. Others were receiving business favors: Pentagon associates like Doug Feith and Richard Perle had interests in Israel and Turkey. The stolen information was being sold, and the money that was being generated was used to corrupt certain congressmen to influence policy and provide still more information—in many cases information related to nuclear technology.

EDMONDS: As well as weapons technology, conventional weapons technology, and Pentagon policy-related information.

GIRALDI: You also have information on al-Qaeda, specifically al-Qaeda in Central Asia and Bosnia. You were privy to conversations that suggested the CIA was supporting al-Qaeda in central Asia and the Balkans, training people to get money, get weapons, and this contact continued until 9/11...

EDMONDS: I don't know if it was CIA. There were certain forces in the U.S. government who worked with the Turkish paramilitary groups, including Abdullah Çatli's group, Fethullah Gülen.

GIRALDI: Well, that could be either Joint Special Operations Command or CIA.

EDMONDS: Maybe in a lot of cases when they said State Department, they meant CIA?

GIRALDI: When they said State Department, they probably meant CIA.

EDMONDS: Okay. So these conversations, between 1997 and 2001, had to do with a Central Asia operation that involved bin Laden. Not once did anybody use the word "al-Qaeda." It was always "mujahideen," always "bin Laden" and, in fact, not "bin Laden" but "bin Ladens" plural. There were several bin Ladens who were going on private jets to Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. The Turkish ambassador in Azerbaijan worked with them.

There were bin Ladens, with the help of Pakistanis or Saudis, under our management. Marc Grossman was leading it, 100 percent, bringing people from East Turkestan into Kyrgyzstan, from Kyrgyzstan to Azerbaijan, from Azerbaijan some of them were being channeled to Chechnya, some of them were being channeled to Bosnia. From Turkey, they were putting all these bin Ladens on NATO planes. People and weapons went one way, drugs came back.

GIRALDI: Was the U.S. government aware of this circular deal?

EDMONDS: 100 percent. A lot of the drugs were going to Belgium with NATO planes. After that, they went to the UK, and a lot came to the U.S. via military planes to distribution centers in Chicago and Paterson, New Jersey. Turkish diplomats who would never be searched were coming with suitcases of heroin.

GIRALDI: And, of course, none of this has been investigated. What do you think the chances are that the Obama administration will try to end this criminal activity?

EDMONDS: Well, even during Obama's presidential campaign, I did not buy into his slogan of "change" being promoted by the media and, unfortunately, by the naïve blogosphere. First of all, Obama's record as a senator, short as it

was, spoke clearly. For all those changes that he was promising, he had done nothing. In fact, he had taken the opposite position, whether it was regarding the NSA's wiretapping or the issue of national-security whistleblowers. We whistleblowers had written to his Senate office. He never responded, even though he was on the relevant committees.

As soon as Obama became president, he showed us that the State Secrets Privilege was going to continue to be a tool of choice. It's an arcane executive privilege to cover up wrongdoing—in many cases, criminal activities. And the Obama administration has not only defended using the State Secrets Privilege, it has been trying to take it even further than the previous terrible administration by maintaining that the U.S. government has sovereign immunity. This is Obama's change: his administration seems to think it doesn't even have to invoke state secrets as our leaders are emperors who possess this sovereign immunity. This is not the kind of language that anybody in a democracy would use.

The other thing I noticed is how Chicago, with its culture of political corruption, is central to the new administration. When I saw that Obama's choice of chief of staff was Rahm Emanuel, knowing his relationship with Mayor Richard Daley and with the Hastert crowd, I knew we were not going to see positive changes. Changes possibly, but changes for the worse. It was no coincidence that the Turkish criminal entity's operation centered on Chicago. ■

Sibel Edmonds is a former FBI translator and the founder of the National Security Whistleblowers Coalition. Philip Giraldi is a former CIA officer and The American Conservative's Deep Background columnist.

Tired Out

Down at the Chinese outlet store in Albany known as Wal-Mart, Chinese tires have so successfully undercut U.S.-made tires that the Cooper Tire factory in that

south Georgia town had to shut down. Twenty-one hundred Georgians lost their jobs.

How could tires made on the other side of the world, then shipped to Albany, be sold for less than tires made in Albany?

Here's how: At Cooper Tire, the wages were \$18 to \$21 per hour. In China, they are a fraction of that. The Albany factory was subject to U.S. health-and-safety, wage-and-hour, and civil-rights laws from which Chinese plants are exempt. Environmental standards had to be met at Cooper Tire, or the plant would have been closed. Chinese factories are notorious polluters.

China won the competition because the 14th Amendment's "equal protection of the laws" does not apply to the People's Republic. While free-trade laws grant China free and equal access to the U.S. market, China can pay workers wages and force them to work hours that would violate U.S. law, and China can operate plants whose health, safety, and environmental standards would have their U.S. competitors shut down as public nuisances.

Beijing also manipulates its currency to keep export prices low and grants a rebate on its value-added tax on exports to the U.S.A., while imposing a value-added tax on goods coming from the United States.

Thus did China, from 2004 to 2008, triple her share of the U.S. tire market from 5 percent to 17 percent. But not to worry. Cooper Tire has seen the light

and is now opening and acquiring plants in China and sending Albany workers over to train the Chinese who took their jobs.

Welcome to 21st-century America, where globalism has replaced patriotism as the civil religion of our corporate elites. As Thomas Jefferson reminded us, "Merchants have no country."

What has this meant to the Republic that was once the most self-sufficient and independent in all of history?

Since 2001, when George W. Bush took the oath, the United States has run \$3.8 trillion in trade deficits in manufactured goods, more than twice the \$1.68 trillion in trade deficits we ran for imported oil and gas. Our trade deficit with China in manufactured goods alone, \$1.58 trillion over those eight years, roughly equals the entire U.S. trade deficit for oil and gas.

U.S. politicians never cease to wail about the need for "energy independence." But why is our dependence on the oil of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf, Nigeria, Canada, Mexico, and Venezuela a greater concern than our dependence on a non-democratic rival power for computers and vital components of our weapons systems and high-tech industries?

Auggie Tantillo, executive director of the American Manufacturing Trade Action Committee, compellingly argues, "Running a trade deficit for natural resources that the United States lacks is something that cannot be helped, but running a massive deficit in manmade products that America easily could produce

itself is a choice—a poor choice that is bankrupting the country and responsible for the loss of millions of jobs."

How many millions of jobs? In the George W. Bush years, we lost 5.3 million manufacturing jobs, one-fourth to one-third of all we had in 2001.

And our dependence on China is growing. Where Beijing was responsible for 60 percent of the U.S. trade deficit in manufactured goods in 2008, in the first six months of 2009, China accounted for 79 percent of our trade deficit in manufactured goods.

How can we end this dependency and begin building factories and creating jobs here, rather than deepening our dependency on a China that seeks to take our place in the sun? The same way Alexander Hamilton did, when we Americans produced almost nothing and were even more dependent on Great Britain than we are on China today.

Let us do unto our trading partners as they have done unto us. As they rebate value-added taxes on exports to us and impose a value-added tax on our exports to them, let us reciprocate. Impose a border tax equal to a VAT on all their goods entering the U.S. and cut corporate taxes on all manufacturing done here in the United States.

Where they have tilted the playing field against us, let us tilt it back again. Transnational companies are as amoral as sharks. What is needed is simply to cut their profits from moving factories and jobs abroad and increase their profits for bringing them back to the U.S.

It's not rocket science. Hamilton, James Madison, and Abraham Lincoln all did it. Obama's tariffs on Chinese tires are a good start. ■

Five Faces of Jerry Brown

Which incarnation is eyeing California's top job (again)?

By Jesse Walker

OFFICIALLY, Jerry Brown isn't a candidate in California's budding gubernatorial campaign. Unofficially, he's widely expected to take the Democratic nomination and has a good shot at prevailing in the general election. If he wins, he'll be reclaiming a job he left 28 years before, embarking on yet another chapter in a life that has changed direction more times than a Sarah Palin sentence.

By turns eccentric and ambitious, spacey and shrewd, Brown has shown more faces in the last four decades than any ordinary statesman: a conventional heir to a political dynasty, a hippie-monkish governor with a taste for visionary ideas, a populist insurgent and talk-show host who rubbed shoulders with the radical Left, a nuts-and-bolts mayor of a corroded California city. Whatever his next incarnation might be, it will be rooted somehow in all the other versions that came before it.

The First Face of Jerry Brown

When Jerry Brown entered politics, he wasn't called Jerry Brown. He was Edmund G. Brown Jr., son of a former governor and, as far as the average voter could tell, not so different from dad. At this point, the younger Brown had been through several lives already: a seminary student who stopped short of becoming a priest, a globetrotting seeker who studied abroad, a lawyer who needed two tries to pass the California Bar. But his public life began as Pat Brown's kid, getting elected to the Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees in 1969 because he shared

his father's name and then becoming California's secretary of state more or less the same way.

The senior Brown was associated with popular programs ranging from the Interstate to the state university system, and he was skilled at working both sides of the aisle. He had made his share of political missteps—Ronald Reagan's right-wing rebellion had blindsided him in 1966—but now he was a revered elder statesman. Voters remembered him fondly enough to cast their ballots for an almost identical name.

In 1974, at age 36, Jerry Brown won the race to replace the retiring Reagan as governor, defeating the Republican nominee Houston Flournoy with a vague campaign that didn't reveal much about Brown's views. In an entertaining tell-all, *Jerry Brown: The Man on the White Horse*, J.D. Lorenz, a fired Brown aide, quoted his boss bragging about a TV ad on crime: "I sound tougher than Flournoy, and I haven't proposed anything the liberals can criticize me for. In fact, I haven't committed myself to do anything at all." In *Mother Jones*, Paul Jacobs reported watching the future governor work some potential voters. The candidate didn't invoke space exploration or Buddhist economics. He said, "Hello, I'm Jerry Brown. I'm Pat Brown's son, and I'm running for governor. I hope you'll vote for me."

His unorthodox side was almost completely concealed. In that first gubernatorial campaign, a minor candidate—Elizabeth Keathley of the radical Peace and Freedom Party—promised that if

elected, she'd adopt Brown and give him his old room in the governor's mansion back. No one suspected that once in office, Brown would decide to do without a mansion altogether.

The Second Face of Jerry Brown

Brown served two four-year terms as California's governor, and during that time he ran twice for the presidency. As his fame grew, he developed a bizarre public reputation in much of the country, but in his home state at least he was a successful politician. Widely remembered as a flamboyant liberal, he in fact mixed ideas from Left and Right, attracting support from Californians who ordinarily despised Democrats. When he ran for re-election in 1978, he managed to carry even the famously Republican Orange County.

In office, the younger Brown was anything but a clone of his father. Pat Brown had been an establishment Democrat of the mid-20th century, liberal but not radical, with both feet planted in the Roosevelt coalition. Jerry was an unconventional governor with a fondness for unconventional ideas; his style owed more to TV than to traditional machine politics. If Ronald Reagan was a product of pop culture who remade himself as a politician, Jerry Brown was a politician who made himself a part of pop culture.

Like Reagan, Brown had a gift for media-savvy symbolism. "If a picture was worth a thousand words," Lorenz wrote, "then, in Jerry's view, the right symbol was worth a thousand pictures."



Brown avoided the expensive new governor's mansion and rented a \$275 apartment instead; he drove a Plymouth rather than being chauffeured in a limo; he took a salary cut; he slept on a futon; he dated Linda Ronstadt; he described his job as "a pain in the ass" and told reporters he liked to govern through "creative inaction"; he put the Beat poet Gary Snyder on the California Arts Council. If those impulses weren't entirely consistent, that only enhanced the symbolic effect. Brown didn't represent a coherent ideology so much as an inchoate *gestalt*. In the New Age California of the '70s, that seemed appropriate.

Even Brown's critics sometimes cited the symbols that had gotten attached to the man more often than his actual policies. For decades, the phrase most closely associated with Brown has been "Governor Moonbeam," a jibe from the Chicago columnist Mike Royko, though hardly anyone remembers the proposal that prompted the label. (Brown had suggested the state launch its own communications satellite. The idea doesn't sound so flaky today.) Royko himself disavowed the nickname after the governor gave a speech that impressed him at the 1980 Democratic Convention. But Brown still had trouble shaking the image.

Royko wasn't the only wit who found it hard to call back his Brown-bashing jokes. Consider the Dead Kennedys, the San Francisco punk band behind the most savagely funny pop-culture assault on the governor, the 1979 single "California Über Alles." Many people saw something authoritarian

lurking behind Brown's easygoing rhetoric: he told the *New York Times* that he offered "leadership," not "programs," and after his 1980 presidential campaign sputtered to a close, one of his staffers told *Time* that Brown "began to believe he was the founder of a new movement, a messiah of sorts." Impressions like that prompted the band to record lyrics like these:

*I am Governor Jerry Brown
My aura smiles and never frowns
Soon I will be president...*

*Zen fascists will control you
100 percent natural
You will jog for the master race
And always wear the happy face*

By the end of the song, the "suede denim secret police" have led an "uncool" girl to a concentration camp, where she's executed with "organic poison gas." The author of those lyrics, Jello Biafra, would speak favorably of Brown's third presidential campaign in 1992. But like Royko, he couldn't stop a thought he'd already released into the world.

Brown's actual policies were just as mixed as his symbols. He was by no means unfriendly to the Left. In his first

presidential campaign, in 1976, he picked Black Panther chief Elaine Brown as one of his convention delegates. But Governor Brown was much more of a fiscal conservative than Governor Reagan, even if he made arguments for austerity that the Republican would never use. (At one point, to get across the idea that a lean organization could outperform a bloated bureaucracy, he offered the example of the Viet Cong.) Reagan had raised taxes several times and boosted spending by an average of 12.2 percent a year. In his first year as governor, by contrast, Brown increased spending by just 4.6 percent, less than the rate of inflation. He wasn't always so restrained in the rest of his reign, but he was thriftier than his predecessor, accumulating one of the biggest budget surpluses in California history. In Brown's first gubernatorial campaign, he had denounced "recycled Reaganism." In Brown's first year in office, Reagan's director of programs and policies joked that his old boss "thinks Jerry Brown has gone too far to the right."

Brown also favored a balanced budget amendment and, though he opposed the tax-cutting Proposition 13 while it was on the ballot, he slashed spending merrily to meet its requirements once the initiative became law. Sometimes his rhetoric seemed to question the very premises of the welfare state. "The income supplement is never going to be enough if people are estranged from society," he told *Time* in 1975. "But if you have children to take care of you, friends, a nice community, it's a winner."

At the same time, he liberalized the state's marijuana law, decriminalized homosexuality, and strongly opposed the death penalty. This combination of fiscal austerity and social tolerance might seem libertarian. Indeed, Eric Garris wrote a generally favorable piece about Brown for *Reason* in 1975, and

Murray Rothbard praised him that same year in *The Libertarian Forum*, though his later remarks about the governor were more caustic. Brown even hired the old left-libertarian firebrand Wilson Clark as his energy adviser. But Brown also called for mandatory national service, endorsed the Humphrey-Hawkins full-employment bill, and deployed a series of subsidies and regulations to enact his environmental agenda. In that same *Time* interview, he turned from denouncing government planning to declaring that public intervention would be necessary to reach full employment.

Many New Agers straddled the boundaries between Left and Right and between libertarianism and statism. But Brown drew on opposite wings of the New Age as well. During the 1980 presidential campaign, Brown hailed two intellectual inspirations: the small-is-beautiful economist E.F. Schumacher and the inventor/futurist Buckminster Fuller. It's difficult to imagine two more different thinkers. Schumacher was the guru of accepting our limits, Fuller the prophet of limitless possibility. But if you wanted to sum up the cocktail that was the crunchy California counterculture of the '70s, it would be hard to find a better pair to invoke. The number of consistent Fullerites or Schumacherians in the world was dwarfed by the number of people who were open-minded enough to read both. Fuller and Schumacher were both staples of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, a publication whose sensibility Brown brought to the governorship. (Indeed, *Whole Earth* regular J. Baldwin joined the state Office of Appropriate Technology, a Brown invention, and *Whole Earth* founder Stewart Brand was named a special adviser to the governor. Brown even contributed to the *Whole Earth* spin-off *CoEvolution Quarterly*, sitting in on interviews with libertarian psychiatrist Thomas Szasz and neoconservative futurist Herman Kahn.)

Perhaps this was just a more intense variety of politics as usual. Nearly every politician dreams of being all things to all people; Brown had found a way to treat that inconstancy as an Aquarian virtue. ("Doonesbury" depicted the governor's supporters chanting, "Hey, ho! Go with the flow!") Yet there was something more here, something that spoke to why Brown was a man of pop culture as well as politics. For many Americans he had come to embody postwar California, a Democratic yin to Reagan's Republican yang.

And something else was at work. With Watergate and the aftereffects of the '60s, mainstream American liberalism moved simultaneously to the left and the right; for the first time in decades, there was a quasi-libertarian current in the Democratic Party. The new liberals were more skeptical of the national-security state, more supportive of civil liberties, and more critical of corporate power. Their skepticism toward centralized authority led them to use the phrase "big government" disparagingly, just like the Reaganites, and to push through more economic deregulation than President Reagan ever would. One effect of freeing the airline and trucking industries, after all, was to bust up some long-lived corporate cartels.

Obviously this wasn't the dominant faction of the party, but it wasn't limited to Brown either. It flared when Eugene McCarthy attacked the Internal Revenue Service, when Fred Harris called for abolishing the Interstate Commerce Commission, when George McGovern—George McGovern!—declared, "Government has become so vast and impersonal that its interests diverge more and more from the interests of ordinary citizens." It had a foothold in the Carter administration, which flirted with legalizing marijuana and embraced bills that deregulated planes, trains, and trucks. Even the

thoroughly technocratic Michael Dukakis paid lip service to such ideas during his first term as governor of Massachusetts.

If the current had a standard-bearer, it was Brown, with his mix of populist bravado, social tolerance, and fiscal restraint. But when Brown challenged Carter for the presidency in 1980, he failed. Being a pop figure, he managed even to flop in a pop-saturated way. The governor brought in Francis Ford Coppola to produce a live half-hour TV special in Madison, Wisconsin, shortly before the state's primary. The results might be the biggest blot on Coppola's filmography: Brown's microphone died, the program opened with a pair of typos ("Live from Madisno, Wisoc"), and images that were supposed to appear behind Brown instead materialized on the candidate's face. Coppola later said the show "looked as if it were a transmission from some clandestine place on Mars."

Brown returned to Sacramento, ran unsuccessfully for the Senate, and left office in 1983. Then he dropped out of politics and traveled the world. At one point he turned up in Japan, studying Zen.

The Third Face of Jerry Brown

In 1989, Brown became the chairman of the California Democratic Party. He threw himself into the business of raising money and getting out the vote. After two years, he quit. Denouncing the "confederacy of corruption, careerism, and campaign consulting in Washington," he entered the 1992 race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

He seemed to be the most left-wing and right-wing man in the field. In an early debate, when moderator Cokie Roberts asked the candidates if they would have paroled an ex-con who had recently raped a child, Brown declared the query manipulative and delivered

an extemporaneous speech about the ways fear of crime feeds a loss of civil liberties. The same candidate called for term limits, a flat tax, and the abolition of the Department of Education. His willingness to break with liberal orthodoxy on taxes led to denunciations from the party regulars, but by the end of the race he had been embraced by much of the Left.

That was partly because he was the only candidate remaining besides Bill Clinton, the establishment's man; partly because he enjoyed the early support of heterodox leftists such as novelist Gore Vidal and columnist Alexander Cockburn; and partly because he moved leftward on one major issue, denouncing NAFTA as the campaign entered the Rust Belt. It was also because Brown had made himself a symbol again. His campaign embraced the emerging alternative media of talk radio and cable TV, and it financed itself with a 1-800 number. (At the first Democratic debate, Brown aggravated the moderator by holding up a sign with his phone number on it every time he answered a question.) It was a grassroots campaign driven by small donations—no contributions greater than \$100 were accepted—and it was more successful than any mainstream analyst expected, drawing in around 120,000 donors and carrying three states. In a year when Pat Buchanan was leading one populist charge on the Right and Ross Perot was leading another in the radical center, Brown emerged as their equivalent on the Left. The fact that the trio more or less agreed on several central issues—trade deals, military intervention, the power of the American establishment—made their triple blitz all the more intriguing.

In the wake of the campaign, Brown seemed to grow even more radical. He got his own talk show on Pacifica, the

long-lived leftist radio network. He interviewed Noam Chomsky for *Spin*. He declared himself a “recovering politician” and resigned from the Democratic Party. He even moved into a commune. When he finally re-entered politics, his ambitions were local: the man who once had governed the nation's most populous state, and had aspired to be president of the entire country, now wanted to tend his own garden as mayor of Oakland, a mid-sized city and one of the most left-wing municipalities in the United States.

During the race, Brown veered away from the visionary talk toward such elemental issues as development and crime. But even his law-and-order plans had a radical scent. Brown called for establishing 57 neighborhood crime-prevention councils, not just to contain misbehavior but to establish “a form of democratic power—the power from below.” The man somehow managed to sound like an anarchist even when he was mulling ways to crack down on law-breakers.

He was easily elected. And then he changed again.

The Fourth Face of Jerry Brown

As mayor, Brown allied himself with cops and developers. He shooed away citizens who fretted that a new condo would disturb some ducks, aggravated labor activists by courting investment from The Gap, allowed the Marines to conduct urban-warfare training maneuvers in the city, and pushed through public funding for the Oakland Military Institute, a prep school for members of the California Cadet Corps. Now he was being denounced by his former allies on the Left and praised in places like the neoconservative *City Journal*. During the California recall election of 2003, he became a regular on right-wing radio stations, bashing Democratic Gov. Gray Davis with glee.

Some of this shift wasn't as severe as it seemed. The military school was a charter school, and the charter-school movement was an easy fit with Brown's old decentralist rhetoric. (Brown told *City Journal* that he would also love to see a charter academy inspired by the legendary free school Summerhill.) And there were plenty of people on the Left who loathed Davis and supported his recall. But Brown governed as a pragmatic centrist, not a New Age guru or a populist radical. In 2000, he rejoined the Democratic Party and endorsed Al Gore in the primaries—the better to maintain federal funding for his city, he said. (The old Brown wasn't entirely dead, though. In the general election he voted for Ralph Nader.)

The strongest sign that Brown had changed his stripes yet again didn't involve a shift from the Left to the Right. It was a shift from the local to the large. After eight years atop Oakland, Brown the relapsed politician ran to be the state attorney general. He took office in January 2007, setting the stage for the latest phase of his career.

The Fifth Face of Jerry Brown

Three and a half decades ago, Jerry Brown replaced a retired movie star as the chief executive of California. Now he's interested in doing the same thing again. A lot can change in the next year, but at the moment he's generally favored to win the Democratic nomination: halfway through 2009, Brown's campaign war chest already held \$7.3 million—and he isn't even a declared candidate yet.

Many of Brown's earlier enthusiasts have given up on him. Cockburn recently upbraided the likely candidate for the “cynicism” of “a platform that denounces medical care for prisoners as a frivolous expense.” Still, Brown's earlier personae aren't absent from his budding campaign. The young governor who told *Time* it

President Obama has declared that the objective of fighting in Af-Pak is to prevent al-Qaeda from using it as a safe haven from which to stage an attack on the United States. Many doubt that al-Qaeda has the resources to take the offensive while others question whether terrorists even require a geographical base to plan an operation. Three American professors are now questioning whether Osama bin Laden is even alive. Angelo Codevilla, Bruce Lawrence, and David Ray Griffin claim that the al-Qaeda leader was most likely killed in December 2001, citing the lack of any independently verifiable sightings of him since that time. Codevilla believes that it is more likely that Elvis still lives. American intelligence has verified a number of audio-tapes of bin Laden, but experts in voice identification admit that the tapes are of poor quality, perhaps deliberately so. It is possible to edit a tape using existing recordings and to keep retaping it until the quality is so low that the editing cannot be detected. The recordings contain bin Laden's actual voice, but there is no way to tell when they were made, even though they refer to current issues, because they might be cleverly produced composites derived from presumably thousands of hours of recordings made by the al-Qaeda leader when he was alive. Griffin believes that U.S. intelligence knows the truth but is engaging in a massive cover-up because many in the government want the inflated budgets that come from a war against terrorists that goes on forever.



President Obama recognized that America's image in the world was, to say the least, tarnished and made it a principal point of his campaign to insist that he would be able to improve our reputation. He might have started by rooting out all of the neocons who had taken over government-supported broadcasting to overseas audiences, but instead he has opted to maintain the status quo, as with his policies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Not a single top official at the Voice of America or Radio Free Europe has been replaced. In fact, recent developments suggest that the neocons not only remain, but are pursuing their usual vendettas. They recently got rid of their nemesis at the Voice of America Persian Service, Sheila Gandji, who defied them by not promoting war with Iran and refusing to hire their protégé Amir Abbas Fakhraei, a self-promoting Iranian student resistance "hero" who has what might be described as a questionable biography. Head of the Board of Governors James Glassman, an American Enterprise Institute alumnus and Bush administration holdover as State's undersecretary for public diplomacy, promised Republicans during his Senate confirmation hearings in 2008 that he would get rid of Gandji. Glassman will soon be moving on to become executive director of the "action-oriented think tank" at the Bush Library at Southern Methodist University. The George W. Bush Institute will promote the "ideas" that came out of the Bush White House.

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was "a very salutary exercise to learn to live with" the "limit to the good things we have in this country" is now telling the same magazine that we're in, yes, "an era of limits." At a time when Washington Democrats think the way out of the recession is to encourage unsustainable consumer spending, Brown is denouncing the dangers of debt. "We're borrowing what we don't have to buy things we don't need," he said earlier this year, in a remark aimed not just at ordinary citizens but at the government itself. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, like Governor Reagan before him, has spent heavily after being elected on a platform of fiscal restraint. The young Jerry Brown brought some discipline to the state's books. Perhaps the septuagenarian Brown can do the same.

Or perhaps he'll just pander. The man has reversed course so many times before that there's no reason to assume he'll stand by anything he says. When Jerry Brown wants power, he has a good sense of what he has to do to win and maintain it.

The fifth face of Jerry Brown might bear a family resemblance to the first face of Jerry Brown. The attorney general of the state of California isn't an inexperienced kid running on his father's name, but he looks more than a little like his father, a long-lived statesman who had his share of principles but tried not to let them get in the way of political survival. Jerry Brown is an intelligent man with a genuine love of ideas and an intuitive grasp of left-coast culture. If he's more likely than most politicians to say something deeply silly, he's also more likely to say something deeply right. But at his core, he's Edmund G. Brown. ■

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That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore

Just when you thought your spirits couldn't sink any lower, along comes Sony with a box set of Monty Python romps—"Celebrating 400 Years of Monty

Python"—to mark the 40th anniversary of what publicity monkeys like to call the "ground-breaking" TV comedy series. *Four hundred* years? Sure. The extra zero makes it "surreal" or "Pythoneseque."

Try not to die laughing. The only funny thing about Monty Python is that a lot of people still find it funny, not least in the United States, where the show's anniversary is being marked by a gig at the Ziegfeld Theater in New York City. What we have here, I fear, is further evidence of the incorrigible Anglophilia of the American liberal Left.

The sun has not set on the British empire of pop culture. First it was the Beatles, then David Frost, then the Stones, then the Pythons ... and now John Oliver of "The Daily Show" (more on that in a moment).

America really is the land of opportunity for the "plausible Englishman"—the sort of fellow who is as street smart as a fourth-generation Italian pimp but who does not go native. I am not thinking of Tina Brown or Andrew Sullivan, who are not so much plausibly English as implausibly American. No, the type I have in mind was identified by Tom Wolfe in the character of Peter Fallow, the boozy English journalist in *Bonfire of the Vanities*.

Some say that Fallow was based on Anthony Haden-Guest—onetime Manhattan journalist and boulevardier and son of the 4th Baron Haden-Guest—but others say that Christopher Hitchens was the model. Englishmen do not come

more plausible than Sir Christopher. He has it all: the ironic smile, the contemptuous drawl, the bogus self-deprecation, the sardonic asides about dumb fundamentalists.

In truth, though, it does not take much to be a plausible Englishman. Consider John Oliver, Jon Stewart's grotesquely English sidekick on "The Daily Show." He is not funny. Why did Stewart hire him? One answer is that Stewart is not funny, either, not these days anyway, but my hunch is that Stewart picked him because he is English.

If you can make it in New York, say New Yorkers, you can make it anywhere, but Oliver couldn't make it anywhere except New York. Or am I being unkind? He might make it as a warm-up act in Hikitika, New Zealand.

It's not just that Oliver's routines are leaden—Stewart and his team share responsibility for that—his sociopolitical persona is all wrong. He doesn't fit. There is something inappropriate about his apparent familiarity with the American scene. If I were an American, I'd resent having Oliver instruct me in politics. It's bad enough being an Englishman and having Irwin Stelzer instruct me, in the pages of the *Daily Telegraph*, to shape up and show a little more respect for Uncle Sam.

Oliver is a provincial leftie. He checks all the right boxes. He is against racism, sexism, pedophilia, the Religious Right, the GOP, and he doesn't care who knows it. He is a no-risk comedian.

Socialized medicine? For it. Last time I saw "The Daily Show," Oliver was doing a routine on healthcare. He lifted up the back of his jacket and shirt, displaying a huge pair of plastic testicles and saying: "Yes ... they're my testicles, Jon, testicles, carefully moved to my back by a poorly incentivized government doctor." As if ... Geddit? We are talking cutting-edge satire. The item was greeted with hoots of laughter. Could this really have been New York? It sounded like a bad night in Tbilisi, or Birmingham, England.

Over at Comedy Central Insider—"the blog by and for comedy nerds"—there are signs of revolt. "John Oliver is painfully unfunny," declares one nerd. "NOT FUNNY. I don't watch Daily Show religiously so I really tried to give him a chance for a while ... but piece after piece, he's been the most consistently unfunny element of the program. I'm American, love British humor, but Oliver's material is so obvious and often grating. Shallow stuff without any greater resonance."

"Have to agree with the John Oliver sucks crowd," says another. "He's completely predicable and does not know funny at all, no British persons do."

Time for me to split, then, but one more thing: before Monty Python there was "That Was The Week That Was," anchored by David Frost and known as TW3, and before that there was Lenny Bruce, American dope fiend and potty mouth. Bruce inspired the satire boom in London in the early sixties and was adored by the future Pythons. So Lenny Bruce started it. See what I'm saying? Bruce=TW3=Python=Oliver. So John Oliver is your fault. A nation gets the comedians it deserves. ■

Deformed Conservatism

David Brooks rebrands the failed philosophy of George W. Bush.

By W. James Antle III

WRITING A WEEK after the 2008 presidential election, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks tried to handicap the “fight over the future of conservatism.” It would be a battle between “traditionalists,” who want to “Cut government, cut taxes, restrict immigration,” and “reformers,” who agree with an old line by George H.W. Bush: “I’m a conservative, but I’m not a nut about it.” If the traditionalists believed in the Right’s “true creed” and the Republican Party’s “core ideas,” the reformers’ platform was more amorphous.

Reformers care about global warming, worry about the middle class, have made peace with the welfare state, and want to win over voters who are moderate, college-educated, or Hispanic, but not necessarily in that order. They are more readily identifiable by who they are than by the specific policies they advocate. According to Brooks, the “Reformist view is articulated most fully by books, such as *Comeback* by David Frum and *Grand New Party* by Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, as well as the various writings of people like Ramesh Ponnuru, Yuval Levin, Jim Manzi, Rod Dreher, Peggy Noonan and, at the moderate edge, me.” The traditionalists, by contrast, are Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Sarah Palin, and Joe the Plumber.

Such a crude dichotomy might sound like a more promising basis for a throw-away column than a serious discussion of the future of a political movement, but conservatives are still talking about it a year later. Despite Brooks’s prediction that they would be marginalized and purged, reformist conservatives have

thrived in the mainstream media and found the pages of *National Review*, the *Weekly Standard*, and other conservative movement publications open to them. Douthat joined Brooks as a regular columnist for the *New York Times*. The reformists even have their own new magazine, *National Affairs*.

Reformists begin with a few genuine political insights. Crime, marginal income-tax rates, and the number of people on welfare are all lower than when Ronald Reagan was elected. This has understandably made these bread-and-butter conservative issues less salient to voters than the rising cost of healthcare, a policy area where the debate has changed since the 1990s. There are now self-employed workers, a natural GOP constituency if there ever was one, who would rather absorb moderate tax increases than continue to pay for their own health insurance. There are also businesses that would prefer to dump their employees onto a government-run “public option” rather than provide them with private health insurance.

Much of reformist conservatism is really an aesthetic judgment about the Republican Party and conservative movement, one that is difficult for fair-minded observers to reject entirely. Some popular radio talk-show hosts are loud and boorish. Some personalities who resonate with self-described conservatives are deeply unpopular among most other Americans. Elements of the movement have been hostile to new ideas, spending their time, as Brooks puts it, “living inside the large conservative cocoon and telling each other things

they already agree with.” Conservatives have perhaps not been hostile enough to new Obama-era conspiracy theories, as Republican “birthers” complement Democratic 9/11 “truthers.”

But the reformist critique would be more convincing if more of its prominent exponents had been complaining about the state of conservatism before Republicans started losing elections. Instead, many of them were staunch supporters of George W. Bush and John McCain, imagining them to be promising vessels for the reformists’ “new ideas.” To be sure, reformers were critical of McCain’s listless presidential campaign and did not believe that Bush’s compassionate conservatism went far enough. This, however, is criticism along the same lines as those supply-siders who thought the 2001 Bush tax cuts did not focus enough on reducing marginal rates.

In fact, the reformists tended to support the very Bush-era policies that ushered in the Obama administration and Democratic congressional majorities. Virtually all of them favored invading Iraq. Although many of them now concede that the war did not go as well, pre-surge, as they had hoped, most of them continue to believe the decision to attack Iraq was justified. The Iraq War and the foreign-policy ideas that gave rise to it are conspicuous by their absence from reformists’ list of areas where Republicans or conservatives need to change. Only Dreher, who is more traditionalist in the Russell Kirk sense than Brooks’s “traditionalists” or “reformers,” and Douthat, in an interview with *Catholic World Report*, have counted Iraq among Bush’s

biggest mistakes in office.

If Iraq was the biggest cause of the Republican “thumpin’” in 2006, the financial meltdown was the heaviest millstone around the GOP’s neck in 2008. Here the reformist record is not much better. While most conservative criticisms of the Community Reinvestment Act’s role in the housing bubble have, with some justice, focused on Bill Clinton, Bush also preferred diversity to creditworthiness. As Steve Sailer has reported, “the biggest flood of CRA assurances came during the presidency of George W. Bush, who repeatedly called in 2002-2004 for 5.5 million more minority homeowners by 2010.” Yet reformist voices were more likely to be raised in favor of GOP minority outreach than against Bush’s housing policies.

Even less was said about the fundamental irresponsibility of trying to promote economic growth through artificially low interest rates, a loose monetary policy, large permanent increases in federal spending accompanied by small temporary tax cuts, and selective deregulation backed by taxpayer guarantees. The \$700 billion Wall Street bailout was less likely to be opposed by self-styled reformists than by the type of conservative they blame for wrecking the Republican Party. Abolishing the Federal Reserve is one new idea that doesn’t get a respectful hearing on the Frum-edited New Majority website.

Too much of what passes for innovation among “new ideas” conservatives is essentially a more finely tuned version of Bushism. Sometimes this is made explicit: *Commentary* invited Peter Wehner of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and Michael Gerson of the *Washington Post* to contribute a major piece on “The Path to Republican Recovery.” Wehner, as deputy assistant to the president, was a full-time Bush apologist. Gerson, as a presidential speechwriter, penned the lyrics to big-government

conservatism’s siren song. There is almost nothing in their article—which calls for more immigration, a moralistic foreign policy, more foreign aid, and a more robust federal education policy—that was not a stated position of the same administration that presided over the GOP’s spectacular decline.

Stephen M. Teles, writing in *National Affairs*, goes so far as to argue that rehabilitating compassionate conservatism should take precedence over rebuilding the Republican Party. An associate professor at Johns Hopkins and a New America Foundation fellow, Teles suggests restoring “linkages with reformist Democrats” rather than another “attempt to use the Republican party as a battering ram to reform the welfare state.” “The future of compassionate conservatism may, like progressivism before it, depend on attracting ‘respectable people’ across the political spectrum through a slow process of experimenting, organization-building, and seeking out allies,” Teles concludes. “History suggests that this will be a more durable strategy for compassionate conservatism than capturing the Republican party, which has at best been its fair-weather friend.”

The reformists’ political analysis goes off the rails in three significant ways. First, they imagine the Republican Party to be much more antigovernment than it has been in practice. Sometimes they acknowledge this when they want to enlist Reagan to their cause or defend George W. Bush’s conservative credentials. But they seldom admit that the GOP’s actual record of governance comes closer to their vision of conservatism—a more family-friendly welfare state, an interventionist foreign policy, and largely ineffectual attempts to use small policy initiatives to reach out to Democratic constituencies—than it does to the government-slashing, immigration-restricting rhetoric of Glenn Beck.

Second, the reformists exaggerate the

importance of 2006-08’s political trends. Democrats won those elections because Bush was disliked, not because they were loved. Having won power in this way, many Democrats are already finding themselves vulnerable to totally unreformed Republicans. The reformists have largely ignored the political opportunities created by liberal governance, even though liberal misgovernment is the primary contributor to conservative political success since World War II. The GOP may experience a limited revival simply by virtue of being the second choice in a two-party system.

Finally, the reformists are hunting where the ducks aren’t. Rush Limbaugh’s constituency may be small relative to the national population. But the constituency for a revived Rockefeller Republicanism is practically nonexistent. Paradoxically, all of the “Real America” chest-beating, liberal-bating, red-state identity politics behavior that so embarrasses and offends the reformers has grown worse as Bush-McCain Republicans have adopted reformist policies. The reason is simple—there is no other way to turn out the base. Similarly, the hardening of center-Right attitudes against Obama’s expansions of government create political opportunities for a more full-throated conservatism than the GOP has practiced in recent years. But most reformists would flinch from seizing those opportunities.

The country desperately needs a conservatism that is more intellectually sober and a Republican Party that engages with the country’s most pressing problems rather than reliving its Reagan-era glories. But the reformists, whose new ideas are not conservative and whose old ideas are the ones that destroyed the Bush GOP, are the very last pundits Republicans should heed. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.

The Taliban's Toll

How American taxpayer dollars are being used to fund our Afghan enemies

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos

FORGET OPIUM POPPIES for a moment. The Taliban has another huge source of revenue, worth up to \$1 billion a year, which generously supplements its heroin-trafficking income and the cash-flow from rich oil sheiks in the Persian Gulf.

This money comes from you.

The allegation that millions of dollars of U.S aid and military funds have been siphoned off by the Taliban through elaborate extortion rackets is not something government officials readily discuss. But the departing head of the Army Corps of Engineers recently conceded that there was little his agency could do to stop it, and the U.S. State Department launched an investigation after reports of the scandal finally penetrated the mainstream news.

The Pentagon did not respond to *TAC*'s inquiries about charges that local contractors who deliver supplies and equipment to remote NATO bases in Afghanistan are charging Western governments "protection money" to pay off the Taliban, or Taliban-connected middlemen, to protect convoys along dangerous overland supply routes. Yet a growing consensus supports a fearsome prospect: U.S. taxpayers are funding the enemy.

"If you don't pay, you will get attacked, you will not get through," says Peter Jouvenal, a British expat and former BBC journalist who has been living and working in Kabul for nearly 30 years. He has operated several busi-

nesses in Afghanistan, including a small trucking company. "Everybody wins in the short-term," he tells *TAC*. "The Taliban get their money, and the contractors get their money, and the soldiers get their food and fuel supplies. The only one that loses out is the United States taxpayer, who has to foot the bill for all this. That would be acceptable if we were achieving something, but we're not."

In late August, McClatchy News reported that the Taliban now controls districts in two key northern provinces along the new major supply route coming in from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, running through the Hindu Kush mountains and toward the U.S. military's massive Bagram Air Base.

Yet supplies are getting through. Reports suggest that contractors big and small are paying the price for secure delivery, then off-loading that cost to their clients—the military, USAID, or whatever Western aid organization is footing the bill. There is lots of money to be made. At the beginning of this year, Washington announced it would be spending upwards of \$4 billion to construct new facilities and upgrade old ones in order to support the Af-Pak "surge." The strategy included three new combat brigades, as well as new facilities for Afghan soldiers, not to mention the accompanying army of private contractors supporting them.

And that's only part of the story. The U.S. has already appropriated \$38 bil-

lion since 2001 in humanitarian aid and reconstruction funding for its post-invasion nation-building exercises, and the Obama administration wants to increase spending. According to recent reports, much of this money has already disappeared into the pockets of Taliban racketeers, calling into question the success of Western investment over the past eight years. "Virtually every major project includes a healthy cut for insurgents. Call it protection money, call it extortion, or, as the Taliban prefer to term it, 'the spoils of war,' the fact remains that international donors, primarily the United States, are to a large extent financing their own enemy," wrote Jean MacKenzie, Kabul correspondent for the *GlobalPost*, in August.

MacKenzie is one of the few reporters who have tried to run the numbers: the manager of an Afghan firm with "lucrative construction contracts with the U.S. government" builds in a "minimum" charge of 20 percent for Taliban payouts, she writes. He tells his friends privately that he makes upwards of \$1 million per month, \$200,000 of which goes to Taliban heavies.

"It adds up, of course," says MacKenzie, estimating that the "outside limit" of the Taliban's extortion earnings comes to roughly \$1 billion a year. Add to that other sources of corruption in Afghanistan—whether it is the police, the politicians, the elections, or abusive Western contractors—and the picture of

the Af-Pak effort starts to look pretty bleak.

Even worse, it seems that insurgents might be ripping off some contractors, allowing them to proceed with their business, only to turn and use their ill-gotten gains to attack other allied convoys. In the Sept. 7 issue of *Time* magazine, Aryn Baker and Shah Mahmood Barakzai reported from Kabul that a week before a deadly Taliban blast in Kunduz killed four American soldiers, a local businessman, who had been subcontracted by a firm working for the German government, admitted to paying a cash bribe of \$15,000 to a “Taliban middleman.” No one can prove that any of that money went toward assembling the makeshift bomb that killed the troops. “Nevertheless,” conclude Baker and Barakzai, “it is likely that a substantial amount of aid money from many countries—including the U.S.—has made its way, directly or indirectly, into the Taliban’s coffers.”

As the Obama administration struggles to come to terms with the looming reality that the Taliban might have the upper hand in this war, the last thing that government officials and members of Congress want to talk about is the idea that the enemy has his hand in the American purse. Requests for comment to key members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee went unanswered. Requests to House members who had just returned from Afghanistan were met with similar silence.

Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing David Cohen has admitted there is a problem, but will not talk about specifics or scope. In a statement consisting of just two lines, he said, “The Taliban obtains revenues from a variety of sources, including extortion of funds from both legitimate and unlawful activity in Afghanistan and Pakistan.” He finished by saying that an interagency task force had been con-

vened to combat “funding for violent extremist groups.”

Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, overcoming the American chain of command’s habitual preoccupation with opium poppies, has acknowledged that the Taliban does not just make money from the country’s \$4 billion drug trade. “In the past there was a kind of a feeling that the money all came from drugs in Afghanistan,” he told reporters in Pakistan in June. “That is simply not true.”

WE DEPLOY MORE TROOPS, WHO NEED MORE SUPPLIES, MORE FUEL, MORE SHELTER, WHICH IN TURN PROVIDES MORE TARGETS FOR EXTORTION AND MORE REVENUE FOR THE INSURGENCY.

“Rackets, extortion, kidnapping and bank heists are all helping the Pakistani Taliban pay the bills,” wrote Shahan Mufti for *GlobalPost* in August. In an April report about the NATO supply lines through Pakistan into Afghanistan, private intelligence provider Stratfor said:

The Taliban and their jihadist affiliates are ideologically driven to target Western forces and increase the cost for them to remain in the region. There are also a number of criminally motivated fighters who adopt the Taliban label as a convenient cover but who are far more interested in making a profit. Both groups can benefit from racketeering enterprises that allow them to extort hefty protection fees from private security firms in return for the contractors’ physical safety.

Holbrooke preferred to steer clear of that particular angle. Instead, he used the apparently candid moment to try to shift attention toward the shady international donors who send gifts to the Taliban through tenebrous charities and

the like. It is true that foreign donations represent a thorny problem, though the issue is clearly not as embarrassing for the U.S. government as the thought of some Taliban middleman becoming \$10,000 richer so that German International Security Alliance Forces could refill their watering holes.

Over the summer months, the Taliban has revealed, once more, what a cunning adversary it can be—busily skimming off cash from our altruism and

manipulating the supply chain, either by bombing our convoys or shaking them down. Thus the destructive cycle evolves. Profiteers and insurgents thrive as long as the payoffs exceed the risks. We deploy more troops, who need more supplies, more fuel, more shelter, which in turn provide more targets for extortion and more revenue for the insurgency.

Jouvenal, a seasoned commentator on Afghanistan, calls it “business as usual.” “Afghans all know the West has failed,” he says. “This time, when the West packs up ... the Taliban will come back and a lot of people will become refugees again. The thought is to make as much money as you can because you don’t know when you will be a refugee again.” The scramble to extort money, he explains, “increases, as time runs out.”

The Afghans seem able to grasp the reality of things. How long will it take us to get wise to this self-perpetuating disaster? ■

Kelley Beaucar Vlahos is a Washington, D.C.-based freelance reporter.

It's All Greek to Me

Bringing Athens to Africa

By Victor Davis Hanson

The American Conservative *would like to apologize for the rough treatment we gave Victor Davis Hanson in our Dec. 19, 2005 issue, in which our reviewer panned his retelling of the Peloponnesian Wars as "confused," "thoughtless," and "a wild ego trip." We now recognize that this is no way to treat one of America's premier public intellectuals. To make amends, we have offered VDH space to record some recent insights.*

The *National Review* cruise up the Congo River is truly a voyage of discovery. Here is a flourishing society where the central government is not only small enough to drown in a bathtub—in fact, it already has been. A dozen years of constant warfare has led the Congolese to rediscover such timeworn customs of Attic Greece as warring city-states, a more traditional role for women, and chattel slavery. Though scoffed at in fashionable intellectual circles, the old virtues are coming back. To be sure, no American wishes to contemplate the idea of war, but if you just can't resist, the Democratic Republic of the Congo makes a stupendous vacation getaway.

We Americans have strayed from our agrarian roots, losing contact with the grim facts of mortality and violence. Nowadays our educated youths prefer to "grill" their meat per the PC brainwashing of the universities until the flesh is, perhaps tellingly, "pink in the middle."

Of course blue-collar communities throughout America, untainted by such squeamishness, commonly rip apart a

live animal in the town square on a Friday night, smear themselves with its blood, and devour the meat raw rather than forming minced patties called "hamburgers" to be tossed on a charcoal brazier, a practice pervasive among liberal-arts faculties. Growing up amid the small farms of Fresno, I had many a jolly evening tussling over a veal spleen, playing marbles with sheep eyeballs, skipping rope with the tripe, all to the martial strains of our local Bee Gees cover band.

What a marvelous cruise as we continue upriver. My nightly on-deck demonstrations of hoplite infantry tactics with the salad tongs and crudité platter have played to rapt audiences. And, *inter nos*, after challenging all males on board to pepper-grinder duels, VDH remains as undefeated as Alexander of Macedon. I am particularly proud of a lunging surprise attack against Norman Podhoretz in the middle of his after-dinner lecture last night, a gambit that successfully broke through the clustered ranks of Podhoretzes whom I then fought all the way back to the buffet table with short, jabbing strokes.

Watching "Rambo" in the galley last night, I was appalled at what a quisling the title character turns out to be. Admittedly, Rambo proves himself handy with the Kalashnikov and the hunting knife, with a not unimpressive kill count of 1,257 in 93 minutes. But what about scorching the earth, salting the rice paddies, and neutralizing the civilian population? Apparently this Italian-American Colin Powell finds dis-



tasteful the timeless advice given by Cleon of Athens during the Peloponnesian Wars to kill all the men and sell all the women and children into slavery. And just where is Mr. Rambo's flag pin? No American wishes to contemplate the idea of war, but if Vietnam attacks us a second time, I hope we can muster more fortitude than this Jane Fonda wannabe with his quaint half-measures.

So impressed are the riverboat's crew and passengers with my mastery of weaponry and tactics that they have enthusiastically suggested I disembark at the next port of call to give the annual lecture at the classics department of Mbandaka Polytechnic University—which, they tell me, is one of the most prestigious universities in the region. And the boat, they promise, will come right back to pick me up in just a few hours!

Have we forgotten the wisdom of the ancients? Do we even care? Apparently not: my recent attempt to sell a concept for a videogame based on the Battle of Gaugamela elicited only a generic rejection letter from Brainsplatter Entertainment Systems' back office. And to my follow-up query, offering to equip the Pan-Hellenic phalanxes with harquebuses, nunchucks, and Uzi-mounted Quidditch brooms, the tenured radicals at Brainsplatter did not respond at all.

No American wishes to contemplate the idea of war. But when we as a nation are obliged by fate to do battle in Kyrgyzstan, Acapulco, Carthage, and Nantucket, surely our youth will need an X-box game of the highest scholarly standards. By thwarting such an endeavor, the post-structuralists and feminists at Brainsplatter Entertainment Systems have played their own ignoble part in the intellectual degradation of America's youth.

Failing to locate the classics department in Mbandaka, I regale a group of young men lounging on the riverside with an impromptu lecture on the elephant cavalry tactics of Hannibal. The group's bluff commander gives me a hearty slap on the face with a rifle butt and asks if I know how to carry water. The next thing I know, we are all marching toward Katanga to do battle with the Mai-Mai militias. No Namibian mercenary wishes to contemplate the idea of war, but the struggle to vanquish the Mai-Mai is of vital strategic interest to the United States, if not the entire Free World.

Will freedom blink? ■

—as told to Chase Madar

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Cultivating Freedom

Joel Salatin practices ethical animal husbandry—no thanks to the feds.

By Lewis McCrary

JOEL SALATIN calls Abraham Lincoln our “worst president,” not because he destroyed states’ rights or Southern identity, but because he created the United States Department of Agriculture. “There is not another agency that has been so successful at annihilating its own constituency,” he says.

Since his star turn in Michael Pollan’s bestselling *Omnivore’s Dilemma*, Salatin has become a celebrity of the local-food movement. Pollan’s book recounts a week spent at Polyface Farm, Salatin’s 500-acre plot outside Staunton, Virginia.

Despite his friendship with the Berkeley-based Pollan and identification with a movement primarily birthed of the Left, however, Salatin is unabashed about his conservative perspective. He calls himself a “Christian-libertarian-environmentalist-capitalist lunatic.”

At Polyface Farm, the owner jokes, the primary crop is grass. In gently rolling fields, set against a postcard backdrop of the Blue Ridge mountains, Salatin raises grass-fed “salad bar beef,” pastured poultry and eggs, and free-foraging pigs. The last were featured in a “Nightline” report about Salatin’s most famous customer, the fast-food chain Chipotle, which buys most of its pork from organic farms.

Salatin has become accustomed to media coverage. An offer to star in a TV series sits open on his desk, and last summer Polyface was a central tableau of the documentary “Food, Inc.,” which cast a critical eye over the industrial

food system. The film’s message was opaque, giving equal time to large-scale USDA-certified organic producers, mothers calling for more federal oversight, and anti-regulation, small-scale farmers represented by Salatin. While undoubtedly the most entertaining of the bunch, he is aware that he couldn’t win over all viewers, many of whom probably came away with the message that government intervention is the solution. “Our biggest fear is that ‘Food, Inc.’ will move heavy-handed food-safety regulations forward,” he admits.

Salatin is no stranger to skirmishes with state and federal regulators. In his self-published book *Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal*, he recounts, in epic fashion, battles over his on-site processing of poultry. Polyface chickens, which draw rave reviews and customers from hundreds of miles away, are washed and prepared for sale in an open-air environment that regulators found to be unsanitary. After a protracted fight with the bureaucracy and some assistance from local politicians, Salatin was able to retain his farm’s exemption from the regulations, which he insists are only appropriate for multinational corporations.

Because he refuses to abide by USDA rules for federal “organic” certification—Salatin calls it the “O-word”—Polyface relies on word-of-mouth and an open-door policy to encourage transparency, confident that this will draw customers genuinely concerned about the origin of their food and the method

by which it comes to their tables. Polyface, unlike Big Agribusiness, sees showing people around the farm as part of its mission. At a recent open house, Salatin reports that 1,600 people showed up from over two dozen states.

He wants to create an "NRA for local

Agriculture-school faculty who visit Polyface tell Salatin that they are "glad to prove the veracity of [his] model," but immediately ask him, "How much money can you give us to do the research?" For Salatin, this is evidence that, in the end, the bottom line drives the research

tional and libertarian conservatives. Surveying his customer parking lot, Salatin says, "It's absolutely typical to have three Obama bumper stickers alongside three that say, 'Abortion stops a beating heart.'" He is encouraged by the movement's broad appeal, but laments that he cannot convince more of his fellow churchgoers not to "stop for happy meals on the way home from the pro-life rally."

He is often surprised at his reception when he speaks at places like UC Berkeley, where he was prepared for hisses, but received a standing ovation. He was impressed by student-maintained vegetable gardens adjacent to the dormitories.

In his own days at Bob Jones University, where Salatin was an undergraduate in the late 1970s, students would have considered gardening menial. The natural-food movement was seen as so central to the countercultural Left by Bob Jones's evangelical leaders that students were told to avoid "the food cult."

Salatin, who grew up going to natural-food stores, found this hostility from the Right troubling. Today, he is delighted that so many conservatives have joined what he calls the "heritage food movement." (He chuckles, admitting that this is a subtle "slam" at the Heritage Foundation and other conservative think tanks that he claims are in bed with agribusiness.) As for Bob Jones, it has evidently changed its outlook. The university recently honored Salatin as "alumnus of the year."

For all his dialogue with the Left and criticism of the institutional Right, Salatin is enthusiastic about Republican Ron Paul, though he wanted the Texas congressman to run as an independent in 2008. Salatin rejects most right-wing talk-show hosts. He accuses Rush Limbaugh, in particular, of being dismissive of the local food-movement. But Salatin has kind words for Glenn Beck, whom he

HE LAMENTS THAT **HE CANNOT CONVINCE** MORE OF HIS FELLOW CHURCHGOERS **NOT TO "STOP FOR HAPPY MEALS ON THE WAY HOME FROM THE PRO-LIFE RALLY."**

food" and has helped start a small-farm legal defense fund with a hotline that farmers can call for advice when hostile regulators come knocking. Consumers should understand that "if the government has a right to get between your lips and your stomach," he says, all the other freedoms, especially "to shoot, pray, and preach," are diminished. He endorses private, voluntary certification organizations modeled on *Consumer Reports* and says he would be happy to submit to and pay for a third-party referee with standards appropriate to small-scale farming.

The government's monopoly on meat regulation began in 1906, when in response to public panic resulting from the publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Teddy Roosevelt signed legislation mandating federal meat inspections. Today, Salatin claims that agricultural regulation favors multinational corporations such as ConAgra and Monsanto because the science that supports the USDA regulatory framework is paid for by these corporations, which give large grants to leading agricultural academics. "The research coming out of the land-grant universities is a mouthpiece for the corporations," says Salatin, who argues that conventional models don't account for energy consumption: "We can produce more per acre on a fifth of the fuel as the industrial food system."

agenda. "I don't have money. Monsanto has money," he says. He is convinced that industrial agriculture pays for science that is biased toward "bigger, faster, better, cheaper" and ignores unintended costs, particularly damage to the land and human health.

Salatin points out that when science goes wrong, the consequences are sweeping. Always with us is the "propensity for human evil. ... The question is not whether we can eliminate it, but whether we centralize it or decentralize it. ... If I run a dirty ship here, I'm only affecting a few customers. What happens when the USDA determines that feeding dead cows to cows is the new science-based technique? Mad Cow?"

Much as he resists the federal regulatory apparatus, Salatin is skeptical of unqualified celebration of the market, insisting that the status quo, especially when it comes to agriculture, "is not a spontaneous order." He notes, "The butcher, baker, and candlestick maker have been around a lot longer than supermarkets and Wal-Mart." Regulation that favors industrial farming has warped our sense of what Salatin describes as "appropriate scale."

He wants a big-tent local-food movement. While two decades ago, most customers at his farm store were "liberal, hippie, tree-hugger types," he now estimates that an even number are tradi-

praises as both “agendaless” and “truth-seeking.” He points to Beck’s criticism of the USDA and attention to how so-called food-safety regulations threaten small farmers.

He sees himself not as an ideologue, but as a modern farmer reined in by a few first principles. Some charge that small-scale farming is nothing but nostalgia, but Salatin is no Luddite. He uses e-mail and maintains an extensive website and blog. He’s enthusiastic about some new farming equipment but believes agricultural technology must be guided by a moral sense that accounts for both the dignity of the animal and the human consumer. He is persuaded by the arguments of Matthew Scully, a prominent GOP speechwriter who brought animal welfare to the attention of many on the Right, and suggests that Scully’s *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy* be “required reading in all Christian colleges.”

Salatin’s public lectures are peppered with his own references to metaphysics: he’s not afraid to argue that industrial farming has forgotten the “pigness of the pig.” And he doesn’t shy away from connecting American agriculture to our interventionist foreign policy, stating in “Food, Inc.” that “a society that just views a pig as a pile of protoplasmic inanimate structure ... to be manipulated ... is just as likely to view other cultures with the same type of disdain and disrespect and controlling-type mentality.” Moreover, agribusiness, like so many sectors of the economy, is dependent on the foreign oil that keeps America entangled in the Middle East: “We’re fighting a war on the other side of the side of the world to maintain cheap oil so we can maintain an energy-intensive industrial food system,” he says.

Having long referred to his activism as a “ministry,” Salatin also trains new missionaries. With seven summer

interns and three year-long apprentices, this small tract in Virginia is a sort of seminary, with trainees living and taking meals together. Salatin admits that he preaches to his on-sight followers, occasionally reading passages from his favorite books over dinner. Most of these young people have no farming background and have never lived in rural areas. They come to him, Salatin is convinced, because they are looking for a “noble vocation”—to “do something sacred with their lives, hang the money.”

The ministry is a family enterprise. Salatin’s 28-year-old son Daniel is now the third generation to farm this patch of the Blue Ridge. The traditional conservative emphases on the importance of place and family clearly resonate with Salatin. He suggests that most solutions start at home. Instead of calling your congressman for more regulation, as a postscript to “Food, Inc.”

THE FARM’S WEBSITE SAYS, “**WE DO NOT SHIP ANYTHING ANYWHERE. WE ENCOURAGE FOLKS TO FIND THEIR LOCAL PRODUCERS AND PATRONIZE THEM.**”

instructs, he recommends “cook[ing] your own meal from your home-grown garden.”

Salatin’s own home-based business has been wildly successful. Polyface products are so highly regarded that he no longer needs to sell at farmers’ markets. Instead, most of his consumer sales come from visitors—many admit to driving hundreds of miles to buy from Polyface—and cooperative buying clubs in the Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Virginia metro areas.

Unlike other online purveyors of grass-fed beef and poultry, most of whom ship nationwide, it’s difficult to taste Salatin’s products unless you live within a day’s drive of Polyface. The

farm’s website says, “We do not ship anything anywhere. We encourage folks to find their local producers and patronize them.” In the preface to Salatin’s book *Holy Cows and Hog Heaven*, Pollan explains that he first thought there might be something more to this farmer when Salatin refused to FedEx his products to Pollan’s home in California.

Salatin is convinced that this air of authenticity gives him broad appeal. He is not an armchair intellectual who pontificates from a plush think-tank office. He spoke with *TAC* at a picnic table on the lawn of the farmhouse, clad in his trademark suspenders and straw hat, dirt under his fingernails from working the fields. Most of his writing is relegated to the winter, when Polyface shuts to visitors and Salatin retreats to his Macintosh to compose his manifestos. He says that at least one of his half-dozen self-published

monographs has sold in the tens of thousands, and he plans to write another this winter, with the provisional title *The Sheer Ecstasy of Being a Lunatic Farmer*.

Though not without a sense of humor, Joel Salatin is on a deeply serious mission. The unholy alliance of Big Agribusiness and Big Government, which is “so prejudicial against grass-roots innovation,” is no less than “evil.” So as long as people are listening, this lunatic farmer will keep shouting. Watch out, USDA. ■

Lewis McCrary is a doctoral student at Georgetown University and a former editorial assistant at TAC.

No Easy Money

The case for raising interest rates

By Charles Hugh Smith

HERE'S THE RECIPE for endless prosperity, central planning version: start with a little inflation to plump up asset values, encourage spending and make debt easier to pay off in the future, then add in declining interest rates to encourage expansion and reward buyers of bonds. (As interest rates drop, the value of the bond rises.) Lastly, run some big government deficits to stimulate spending and toss in expanding money supply so there will always be plenty of dollars to borrow and spend.

Our central planners—the Federal Reserve and the U.S. Treasury—have furiously combined these ingredients, and the world watches anxiously to see if the results will be

- A return to cheap-money prosperity;
- A Japan-style no-growth deflation;
- Argentine-style debt repudiation and currency devaluation.

Despite the assurances of Bernanke and associates, the recipe can turn out badly: you can drop interest rates to nearly zero and still get deflation and no growth in the real economy. Alternatively, reckless expansion of cheap money and government deficits undermine the nation's currency and creditworthiness, triggering debt repudiation and ruinous devaluation.

Some are saying that the U.S. is following the path to doom even as the Fed insists that Japan-style deflation and the devaluation of the dollar are impossible. (What else can central planners say? The five-year plan to eternal prosperity is failing? That would be a quick ticket

to Siberia—by which I mean the Commerce Department.)

Forecasting the direction of all these moving parts is like predicting the outcome of a 3-D chess match with multiple players randomly moving pieces. So let's focus on interest rates, the only force over which the market really has any sway.

If central planners only create money and give it away, the results are predictable: an oversupply of "free money" leads to inflation. Instead, they manage the business cycle by manipulating the supply of and demand for money. If the Goldilocks Economy is getting a tad overheated, the Fed withdraws money and raises short-term interest rates. Businesses and consumers borrow and spend less, and Goldilocks breathes a sigh of relief. If the economy catches a chill, then the Fed "injects liquidity" and lowers interest rates, encouraging more borrowing and spending.

This seems to work pretty well, until it doesn't. Japan has been borrowing a truly insane 40 percent of its government spending for years and has kept its interest rates so near zero that the prospect of a mighty one-quarter percent increase causes panic. So who's going to bury money in a bond paying a dime of interest a decade? Well, government, of course, because it can create the money to buy its own bonds. And other investors will, too, if they fear all other investing options will only drop in value. That's a sad statement about the prospects for real estate and new enterprises in Japan.

But super-low interest rates and mas-

sive government borrowing require something special: a huge pool of surplus capital that can be sunk in no-return government bonds. How dumb does money have to be to do that year after year?

The explanation of Japan's weird stability in going nowhere is partly cultural, which is why drawing parallels between the U.S. and Japan is perilous. In Japan, Big Business, banks, insurance companies, and the government aren't just in bed with each other: they tuck each other in and put mints on each others' pillows. Thus super-low interest rates and liquidity are only available on an institutional level. The average small business in Japan can't borrow unlimited sums at near-zero interest, but global institutional buyers borrowed trillions of yen at low interest and invested the money elsewhere at higher returns: the infamous "yen carry trade."

The other cultural factor at work is Japan's prodigious savings rate, which for many years hovered above 20 percent—though it is now dropping as times get tough—compared to a zero or even negative rate in the United States. With opportunities to invest overseas restricted, Japanese savers had limited options: take a gamble on deflating real estate and stocks or buy government bonds. Given that unappealing menu, they chose the bonds.

While Japanese-style government-Wall Street collusion is clearly growing in the U.S., we don't have the key ingredients of Japan's balancing act. There is no giant pool of domestic savings, and battered American investors still have

options that may be more appealing than a 2 percent yield on a Treasury bond.

Without a domestic cache of surplus capital on the same scale as its borrowing needs, the U.S. Treasury has to borrow stupendous sums from overseas “investors”—Asian central banks, oil exporters, etc. These buyers have tremendous incentives to keep U.S. consumers, their customers, afloat on a sea of low interest and easy money, so the game has been managed thusly: as the ability and/or willingness of these buyers to acquire more of America’s debt wanes, the Federal Reserve steps in and buys Treasuries directly. That’s not just placing a mint on the pillow—that’s fluffing the pillow, too.

IS RISK BEING PROPERLY PRICED WHEN **MONEY IS CHEAP** AND NEW **LOANS ARE PRACTICALLY GIVEN AWAY**? OF COURSE IT ISN’T.

Despite all this maneuvering, however, the fundamentals of supply and demand still apply. If there is a huge supply of new debt for sale and little demand, then the Treasury will have to entice buyers with higher interest rates. The U.S. central planners now face a Hobson’s choice: if rates rise, that eventually increases mortgage rates—a bad thing in a recession, according to conventional wisdom. On the other hand, if the Fed creates a few trillion dollars a year to soak up all this new Treasury debt, then the global bond market will start pricing in the risk of inflation or devaluation occurring as a result of this explosion of dollars. The net result is that interest rates rise anyway, regardless of the massive intervention by the Fed.

This is the reason some are muttering darkly about the Argentina Model: when central planners borrow and print money recklessly, outside of outlier Japan, there are only two end-points—hyperinflation or devaluation of the cur-

rency, either of which wipes out the income and wealth of the citizenry.

That can’t possibly happen here, or so we are reassured. The dollar is the world’s reserve currency—except now other nations are tiring of our monopoly on printing money and passing it off without consequence. What does all this mean for average Americans? There are two basic results, both pernicious.

Super-low interest rates may be wonderful for borrowers, but they are terrible for savers and those needing healthy long-term returns. Virtually all the pension funds and life insurance companies in the U.S. need annual long-term returns in the 7-8 percent range; 1-2 percent returns doom them to eventual insol-

vency. Their only choice in a low-rate environment is to demand more cash from their contributors and the insured—a movement that is already visible as public pension plans are notifying cash-strapped cities, school districts, and agencies that their pension contributions are about to skyrocket. That ends up taking huge chunks of money out of consumers’ pockets, the exact opposite of what central planners intend.

Borrowers—especially those institutions in bed with the Fed and Treasury—have a major incentive to borrow money cheap and speculate with it—the U.S. version of the old “yen carry trade” in Japan that reaped billions for institutional players and nothing for the real economy. Indeed, many believe the current global stock-market rally is nothing but hot money borrowed from central bankers gushing into speculative markets for a quick return. Give people vast sums of essentially free money, and, remarkably enough, they tend to play

fast and loose with risk. (File next to “subprime mortgage mess.”)

This “free money” phenomenon is also dangerous for homebuyers. Now that the loose lenders Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have been throttled by insolvency, the central planners are expanding operations at the two remaining state lenders: FHA and Ginnie Mae. Get your guaranteed mortgage with 3.5 percent down right here! While that is marginally better than zero, it sure isn’t 20 percent. In other words, the same old game of low down-payments and easy mortgage money is being played, sweetened by an \$8,000 credit for new homebuyers. No wonder housing is “recovering.”

Is risk being properly priced when money is cheap and new loans are practically given away? Of course it isn’t. Eventually, the global bond market will become uneasy about the government game of printing money to buy its own debt and the purposeful injection of nearly free money.

Supply and demand still matter. According to analysts, global governments are borrowing \$5 trillion this year to fund their vast stimulus packages. Then there’s private-sector demand for business loans, mortgages, consumer credit, local government bond issues, and so on. Considering that some \$35 trillion in global wealth has vanished in the past two years and corporate profitability has plummeted, it’s fair to ask what happens if there’s not enough global surplus capital to fund the explosion of public demand for borrowing.

Economies with immense reserves of cash, opaque central banks, and a citizenry of prodigious savers obviously have the wherewithal to fund massive stimulus spending without worrying too much about global bond markets’ assessments of risk and return. But the U.S. has only one of those “assets”: an opaque central bank. Given the pathetic interest

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Mobile Homeless

America's professional gypsies

By Peter T. Kilborn

JIM LINK was paying his way through Texas A&M tending bar. Darker than Kathy Kessler and two inches taller, he was serving drinks on the patio of a student pub. She thought him a goofball and younger than she, though he was seven months older. He thought her distant and dazzling.

They married three years later, in 1988. Kathy became a technical editor for a company that made flight simulators. Jim went to the Prudential Insurance Company to sell insurance, annuities, and mutual funds.

The Links bought their first home in the master-planned community of Clear Lake City, now a part of Houston. Kathy juggled career and family after their daughters Kelsey and Kristina were born. But in 1994, when T. Rowe Price hired Jim and sent him to its headquarters in Baltimore to manage sales of 401(k) retirement plans to businesses, she was expecting their third child, and she stopped working. It made sense, with Jim's transfer.

The Links had become Relos.

I had never heard the word *Relo* until a visit to Alpharetta, Georgia, in early 2004. Then I heard it on every lawn. I came upon a Memorial Day fair in Medlock Bridge, a subdivision of 636 homes. Jim, still the affable bartender, was manning the beer cooler. In the past ten years, the Links had moved from Houston to Baltimore to Rochester, New York, and, in 2000, to Alpharetta. In 25 years, Alpharetta had grown from 3,000 people dispersed over cotton fields to a checkerboard of fresh asphalt and tidy

subdivisions with 40,000 people.

Young and middle-aged families at the fair, all with kids, all into sports, all with spacious late-model houses and late-model SUV's, were calling themselves Relos. "*Relo*" was a noun, a verb, and adjective. Relos were *Relo-ed* by a *Relo* company. They found homes through the "*Relo Man*" or "*Relo Woman*," a special breed of real estate agent who catered to them. Relos got *Relo* mortgages, geared to buyers who expected to sell in just a few years.

They are an affluent, hard-striving class. They inflate the American Dream and put it on wheels. Following the money as they migrate through the suburbs of Atlanta, Denver, and Dallas and the expatriate villages of Beijing and Mumbai, they create an insular, portable, and parallel culture with little-recognized but real implications for American society at large.

Relos have been around for a while. In the 1600s, Britain's Hudson's Bay Company and East India Company began dispatching their traders and accountants across the Americas and Asia. In *A Nation of Strangers*, social critic Vance Packard spotted *Relo* pioneers encamped in the New York suburb of Darien, Connecticut. A "transfer town," he called it, and a "fine prototype of the town for company gypsies."

But the number of Relos was small then, no more than a few hundred thousand. Aspiring managers starting out at companies like United States Steel or General Motors could rise through the hierarchy without ever leaving the

mothership in Pittsburgh or Detroit. Today, a young accounts payable clerk at United Parcel Service in Atlanta would never be anything else without leaving town.

Stalling only during the economic crisis in 2008 and 2009, companies' need for Relos has ballooned with the mind-boggling surge in foreign trade, which leaped from \$374 billion in 1970 to \$3.3 trillion in 2007. Someone knocked on doors to buy and sell all those goods and services, negotiate contracts, run marketing and advertising campaigns, and balance books. Many of those knocking were Relos.

Never staying long in one place and often leapfrogging through a succession of employers, Relos are characters in the West's transformation from an economy built on a bedrock of durable institutions and relationships into a postindustrial economy built on airplanes, ships, the Internet, and short-term arrangements. "Marriage vows, the homestead, corporate stability, and job security—all have suffered in the ever-evolving world" of international commerce and the Internet, writes Ellen Dunham-Jones, head of the architecture program at Georgia Tech. Homes, subdivisions, factories, malls, office parks, and employees, too, become "disposable assets" covered by "temporary contracts."

"Temporary contracts—of all kinds—are based on consuming rather than sustaining relationships," Dunham-Jones says. "The more one's life, property, and landscape consist of temporary con-

tracts, the more one operates as a lone nomad, a sole proprietor within the overwhelming structure of global capital. The lack of constraining relationships affords tremendous individual freedom—but at a cost. A world of temporary contracts inhibits sustained belonging of any kind, inhibits bonding to either people of place.” She adds, “The exchange of long-term relationships for short-term transactions has left us a crowd of perpetual strangers who often fail to recognize the value of shared needs and aspirations.”

The Census Bureau has found that employers transfer or recruit and move about 4 million Americans, including children and spouses, each year. Reports of moving-van operators and companies that manage relocations for employers suggest that active Relos—people who were moved in the last year or two and will be moved again soon—come to around 10 million, or 3 percent of the U.S. population.

Whatever their numbers, Relos’ sway over the economy dwarfs them. Because Relos concentrate in affluent, fast-growing communities where their companies have built headquarters and branch offices, they exert disproportionate influence over the look and character of towns that become models for much of suburbia. “The short-term people don’t give a damn,” says Fred Adam, a 64-year-old lawyer in Castle Rock, Colorado. “They don’t plant trees, they don’t plant bushes.”

Home from the Memorial Day fair, Jim Link admitted that what made Medlock Bridge so comfortable left it flavorless. He was living among clones of himself. “You play tennis with them,” he said. “You have them over to dinner. You go to the same parties. We’re never challenged to learn much about other economic groups. ... It doesn’t give you much of a perspective.”

Relos tend to be economically

homogenous, with mid-career incomes of \$100,000 to \$200,000 a year. They differentiate themselves by their kids’ activities and by the disposable tokens of their success—the leased car and the home du jour. Some find their salaries, toys, and perks compensating. But they often complain of stress and anomie. They trade a home in one place for a job anyplace.

Perched in their Relovilles, they have little in the way of community ties or big, older city amenities like mass transit, museums, zoos, stadiums, and live theater. Outside the gates of their own subdivisions, Relos are ghosts. With the father on the road most weekdays and another move always looming, Relos have neither time nor need to sit on town boards or run in local elections or join the church vestry or the Rotary Club. A Relo breadwinner’s community is the company and his professional associations. Relos build networks of contacts and colleagues across the Internet and see them at conferences. They can tell you the way to the airport but not to city hall.

On a drive through Alpharetta’s subdivisions, Bradd Shore, an anthropologist at Emory University in Atlanta, made a novel observation: “The American family lasts only a generation and a half.” He said that families tend to keep up their rituals after the children move out and begin having children. But when the second generation of children starts leaving, the original family disintegrates unless it makes great efforts to preserve itself. The disintegration, Shore said, is most pronounced among families who abandon their generational moorings.

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May 2004 found Ashley Cottrell, age 11, and her sister Kasey, 10, playing Capture the Flag in the backyard of their house in Providence Oaks subdivision in Alpharetta like it had always been home.

In fact, it was the girls’ third home, following Indianapolis, where they were born and their father, Phil, and their mother divorced, and Sussex, New Jersey, where his company had first moved them. They had spent half of their short lives in Alpharetta, trick-or-treating among neighbors each Halloween, learning to ride bikes on the suburban streets. They knew everyone at Alpharetta Elementary School.

Phil called, “Come on inside. We need to talk.”

The girls froze. “Oh-oh,” Ashley said. “We’re in trouble.” There would be trouble, but it was none of their doing.

“I have some news,” Phil said. “We’ll be moving to Pittsburgh.” By the following Sunday, a “For Sale by Owner” sign stood in front of 2175 Providence Oaks Street. Phil sat at the entrance to the garage facing a listless cul-de-sac, waiting for someone to stop by his moving sale. As he gazed over his family’s belongings, he seemed pleased with his Relo career. At 35, he had reached the career-ladder rung at which ambitious young managers vie for the opportunities that can propel them to the top executive plateau. For that, he and the girls would have to move again. “Relocation is a rite of passage,” he said, conjuring the Relo variation on the American Dream of ever better jobs, wages, and homes. Phil decided he needed a master’s of business administration from a top business school, singled out computational marketing, and identified the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon University. So he was moving to Pittsburgh for three years, where he would enroll at Tepper and telecommute full-time to work at ACNielsen, the market research firm based in the Chicago suburb of Schaumburg.

Unlike Ashley and Kasey, Phil had no particular fondness for Providence Oaks. It was simply a place to park. “There are people in this subdivision—I

don't know them—ten, twenty families who get involved,” he said. “Most of the rest of us keep to ourselves. Several took advantage of the increased equity in their homes and moved to the next level. But that’s not the rule. Most are corporate relocations. They come in on Relo and go out on Relo.” That September, the family moved to Gibsonia, Pennsylvania, an affluent suburb 20 miles north of Pittsburgh.

On a Monday in early February 2007, six inches of shimmering ice-coated snow paved the hilly Treesdale development’s wide lawns. The house was barely six years old when the Cottrells moved there two and a half years earlier, and by then it had already seen two previous owners, presumably also Relos.

At 5,000 square feet, brick with beige trim, the house was more than twice the size of the one they had left in Alpharetta. Tall oak double doors opened to a cavernous echo chamber of space. It felt big enough for a church but was only half furnished.

Ashley and Kasey, 14 and 13 now, were finding their way at the area schools, wide, low-slung, unadorned buildings that looked indistinguishable from their brick-and-mortar kin across most young and affluent suburbs. For Kasey, the social transition had been tough: “Moving here was a horror. I’m not that social. I get scared around new people. The first few days were embarrassing. I don’t know how to make friends.”

In *Restless Nation*, James Jasper asked, “What do kids lose by moving? A ‘place’ in the local culture; in the pecking order; including friendships which reinforce that place. They are still figuring out their first identity, and are hardly ready to start over with a second.” Two researchers for the National Center for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Gloria A. Simpson and Mary Glenn Fowler, found in a 1988 survey of 10,362 school-age children that, compared to children

who had never moved, those who moved three or more times “were 2.3 times more likely to have had emotional/behavioral problems, 2.2 times more likely to have received psychological help, 1.7 times more likely to have repeated a grade, and 1.9 times more likely to have been suspended or expelled.”

With a half year to go at Tepper, Phil was confronting a hostile economy and the limits of a Relo career. He thought he might value something more. Rootless and striving for 15 years, and almost 40 years old, he said, “I’ve been looking back in Indiana. I would like to buy an old homestead. It was built in the 1830s.” At 55 maybe, maybe sooner, he thought he could move to the homestead and retire or telecommute.

But that was a while off, and Phil was hitting some bumps. His second wife, who helped care for the girls, was preoccupied with their daughter, then 3. That and Phil’s absorption with work and his two nights a week in class shattered the intimacy of their marriage. “We agreed fairly amicably to split,” he said. “The marriage dissolved as a direct result of this move.”

After they left, Ashley and Kasey were happy to have bathrooms of their own but felt lonelier. Most days, one or the other would call their mother in Ohio. A caseworker advised that Phil wasn’t home enough for the girls, and in January 2008, a family court judge ruled that their mother should have full custody.

Around the same time, the real estate market pummeled the house, by then pointless to keep with just Phil haunting its 5,000 square feet. He had bought it for \$674,000, almost twice what he got for the house in Alpharetta, and listed it for sale at \$989,000. He dropped it to \$939,000 as the market declined, then to \$899,000, and \$799,000, and still there were no takers. Finally, around Thanksgiving, Nielsen let him go.

A company in New York that scheduled a job interview called to cancel. A company in Chicago that looked promising kept putting him off. In early March 2009, his outlook brightened. A company in San Francisco wanted him to come out for a second interview, but he tried to keep cool. “I want to make sure that the career moves in the direction it has to move.”

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Places define people. A place—a town or a neighborhood with a latitude and a longitude, with walls, windows, and doors, seasons and soil—forms our accents and values, our preferences and references, our learning, aspirations, and diversions, our senses of belonging and continuity. Roots in a place sustain us in youth and old age.

Like most Americans, Relos value their health, homes, jobs, weekends, and immediate neighbors—at least, that is, while they are among them. They get Christmas cards from the last subdivision, but after a couple of years, the cards stop. Relos don’t have accents. Wherever they go, they don’t belong. Their kids don’t know where they are from. Relos don’t know where their funerals will be or who might come. Relos tend to know mostly other Relos, from their offices, subdivisions, PTA’s, and kids’ soccer teams. When I visited Reloville megachurches, which rival Las Vegas for pyrotechnic stagecraft, none of the parishioners acknowledged me. Then I noticed that no one acknowledged anyone. ■

Peter T. Kilborn was a reporter for the New York Times for 30 years. This essay is adapted from Next Stop, Reloville: Life Inside America’s New Rootless Professional Class, copyright 2009 by Peter T. Kilborn. By arrangement with Times Books, an imprint of Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Malcom X Marks the Spot

The late punk frontman Lux Interior insisted, “The way I walk is just the way I walk.” But on a September afternoon in Malcolm X Park, the way you walk is autobiography—

with all the carefully hedged half-truths, unstated cultural assumptions, and unintended self-revelations that make autobiography a subgenre of fiction.

The park is perched between better known D.C. locales like U Street—home of the “Black Broadway,” Washington’s half-smoked Harlem Renaissance—and Adams Morgan. It was christened Meridian Hill Park at birth, but I’ve only seen its maiden name in two places: District government plaques and local girl Florence King’s autobiography, *Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady*.

Chris Rock has a riff in which he notes the tendency of cities to honor Martin Luther King Jr. by naming streets in ghetto neighborhoods after him: “I don’t care where the [redacted] you are in America, if you’re on Martin Luther King Boulevard, there’s some violence going down!” By this logic, you might expect Malcolm X Park to be a post-apocalyptic urban wasteland.

But the park makes a stunning first impression. It’s closed off from the street by high stone stairs and fat shade trees, so as you wind your way up, you feel as though you’re stepping into a secret. A wide, ziggurat-layered fountain pours down like God’s own Slinky, spilling between ferny banks. The fountain is Washingtonian in style: monumental, not subtle or stylish. But there’s a pool here and terraced lawns perfect for sleeping off your unemployment.

This park was not designed by some-

one who understood criminals. It’s an array of alcoves linked by narrow paths and staircases, like a complex board game or a pop-up Sicilian village. The high walls and ample foliage make it a haven for people whose professions or hobbies require a talent for lurking.

On this afternoon, despite the man on a cell phone either recounting a past beatdown or threatening a future one, the only crime victim is the nanny state. Lounging men drink illicit beer in unsubtle paper bags. A lithe young mom poses heroically astride two steps. With her Baby Bjorn full of infant, her green cell phone and her golden dog, she surveys her territory like stout Cortés upon a peak in Darien, Connecticut ... until a cop flatfoots onto the scene and ma’ams her into submission to the leash law.

A black man in low-slung pants and a stocking cap rolls through like a cowboy. Across the chessboard square from him, another black man in a purple dress shirt moves with a weary 9-to-5er gait. Three Hispanics in work clothes have the “guy” walk, a quick bearlike lumber, arms swinging slightly from broad shoulders. One of them catches me looking and tips me a wink. A man in a white linen shirt, with a lilting accent—I’m guessing African—and a sexy ramshackle stroll, walks the park trying to borrow a lighter. He comes back puffing happily, his stride now more confident and less appealing.

A courting couple passes, with the

clockless leisure of love. She turns to watch him, her curls shaking, her smile shifting between admiration and the salutary deprecation that women learn to deploy against overconfident men. He tips his head back to grin up at the branch-latticed sky.

You can still hear the cars and sirens here and the kazooing of the cicadas. The wind slants the fountain sprays. The elm trees are dropping their acorns, and yellow leaves mat some of the paths. A faint mist settles over the pool.

At the top of the stairs—past the lightless women’s restroom, where the tap at the sink can’t be coaxed off—there’s a bandstand and a hilltop promenade. There’s a drum circle here on weekends; today there’s a card game, a smoker in a “Swing Voters Have More Fun” T-shirt, and a knot of men betting cash on dice. There are several formally dressed older black men and women in hats, like visitors from the Age of Adulthood (replaced in our time by the Age of Consent). Three girls on the coltish edge of adolescence walk by like a Nikki Giovanni poem, all syncopated rhythms and flirty half-aggression.

As the shadows lengthen, I head out—down through an allegory of D.C.’s hopes and miseries. I pass the noseless, one-handed statue of Serenity; the man proselytizing his wary friend; someone who, I suspect, is a foot fetishist rather than a podiatrist as he claims; and a police poster, seeking information about a man found fatally injured here. Someone has written along the side, “HE WAS NOT KILL IN THIS PARK.” ■

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Shopped Out

The changing face of American retail

By Cheryl Miller

GLEN BURNIE, MD. – Harundale Plaza does not look like the kind of place where a revolution occurred. For starters, it's now a strip mall, and not a particularly high-end one. There's a grocery store, a post office, a tanning salon, and a Burlington Coat Factory. The architecture is, if not unattractive, generic. Abandoned shopping carts dot the parking lot. The only indication that this is a landmark—as central to American history as Independence Hall or the Chrysler Building—is a small pavilion outside the post office. There, a concrete marker, rounded to look like a rock, sits:

HARUNDALE MALL
Opened: October 1, 1958

Harundale Mall was not the first true mall, but it was a close second. Its developer, James Rouse, a native Marylander, had very nearly built the first with his Baltimore shopping center, Mondawmin. But to Rouse's lasting disappointment, his creditors lost their nerve, and the center went without a roof. Thus, in October 1956, the same month Mondawmin opened, Southdale Center, in Edina, Minnesota, became the first mall, while Harundale had to settle for being "the first indoor enclosed shopping mall East of the Mississippi."

First or second, Harundale set in motion the malling of America. It was an archetype that could be, and was meant to be, copied. It gave the mall its name. (Previously, the term applied to the open spaces between shops rather than the shopping center itself.) But most impor-

tantly, Harundale, unlike Southdale, was built by a developer, not a deep-pocketed department store, proving to other developers that the mall could be a profitable venture.

America now has around 1,100 enclosed malls, according to the International Council of Shopping Centers. But as the current state of Harundale Mall—now downgraded to a mere plaza—suggests, the mall's heyday as America's premier shopping destination is over. Even before the recession, these "pyramids of the boom-years"—to quote Joan Didion's 1970 paean—had been losing market share: to big-box retailers (so-called "category killers" like Home Depot or Bed Bath & Beyond), to chain discounters like Wal-Mart, to e-commerce giants like Amazon and Zappos, and to other, ever newer, ever larger shopping malls. (Drive a mile and a half from Harundale Plaza, and you'll find yet another mall.)

No new enclosed malls have opened in the U.S. since 2006, and nearly 10 percent of America's malls are expected to close within the next few years. Last April, General Growth Properties (GGP)—which acquired Rouse's company in 2004 and is the country's second largest mall-owner—declared bankruptcy. Websites like deadmalls.com and labelscar.com track the growing number of "greyfields," with odes to deteriorating retail centers across America. The "un-malling" of America has begun.

Or has it? The same people who are declaring the mall dead now champion a

new type of commercial space that looks an awful lot like what Rouse wanted for the mall in the 1950s. The best communitarian intentions of suburban planners, it seems, often go awry.

At a 2007 meeting of the Congress for the New Urbanism, Thomas D'Alesandro IV, senior vice president of GGP, declared the familiar mall paradigm—fashion, food court, and family-focused—over. GGP was no longer in the business of building malls, but transforming its existing malls into "mixed-use centers." Indeed, D'Alesandro noted, he had never worked on a mall; his bread-and-butter has been projects like Virginia's Reston Town Center, opened in 1990. The first "suburban downtown" in America, Reston Town Center promised "the vitality of an Italian piazza and the diversity of a French boulevard"—a mall of sorts, yes, but one with a skating rink, a hotel, a cinema, and high-rise condo buildings. "The big idea," D'Alesandro explained, "is to integrate the mall into a larger urban fabric, kind of like the 19th-century urban arcaded streets were in Europe."

The "town center" or "lifestyle center" is the brainchild of the New Urbanism, an influential movement of architects and planners that advocates a return to traditional neighborhood forms, emphasizing dense, mixed-use developments, open, pedestrian-friendly avenues, and public gathering spaces. The animating idea behind New Urbanism is the reinforcement of community ties through good design. The town center is to be the new "Main

Street”—that mythical place synonymous with a particular moment in small-town American life. Main Street encompasses a variety of different places—the New England village green, the Southern courthouse square, the Midwest street—yet it embodies a common cultural ideal. Peter Blackbird, a self-styled “retail historian” and founder of *dead-malls.com*, writes that the malls of tomorrow should be “woven into the fabric of the community, close to where people live and, therefore, easy for pedestrians to access. Developers should also strive to create malls that offer a place for people to socialize, not simply to buy.” Likewise, leading New Urbanists Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson, in their much praised *Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Solutions for Redesigning Suburbs*, suggest including “nonconventional, community-serving tenants”: libraries, nonprofits, community colleges, even churches.

To New Urbanists, the town center is an answer to the rampant sprawl and commercialization unleashed by the suburban mall. But the town center owes more to the traditional mall than one might think. Indeed, it may only be in its waning days—after more than five decades of uninterrupted growth and evolution—that the mall is finally beginning to realize its original purpose.

Certainly, Rouse’s plans for Harundale Mall sound a lot like a New Urbanist town center. Rouse remained nostalgic for his small-town upbringing in Eaton, Maryland, and he wanted to bring that sense of place to greater suburbia. His mall would be a “community lifestyle center”—an antidote both to the disorderly fragmentation of city life and the banal strip-mall culture of suburbia. The mall should serve “as a lively meeting place as well as a market place,” claimed Rouse, and so his facilities included churches, art centers,

libraries, and public gathering spaces. Among the tenants of Harundale Mall were the United Church of Christ, a grocery store, a sidewalk cafe, and scores of mom-and-pop businesses. (Malls are associated with chain stores, but Rouse was a fierce advocate for independents: “The smaller local merchant is able to pitch in with his own hands and his own family, sacrifice income, fight hard for business, and sweat out a tight period,” he wrote to one investor.) There was also a 350-person auditorium, which could be rented out for weddings and civic meetings. A community room hosted Girl and Boy Scout troops meetings and classes for bridge, tap dancing, and first aid. In the evening, a local group hosted square dances. “The soundest economic base for a ‘main street,’” Rouse said of the mall, “is to make it an indispensable servant of the community.”

These were not mere platitudes to Rouse. When he planned his ideal community of Columbia, Maryland—his vision of an “inspired, concerned and loving society”—at the center of each neighborhood “village” was a shopping center, and at the center of the entire town was Columbia Mall.

And now, for all the enthusiasm over “town centers”—so sustainable! so green! so walkable!—most resemble nothing so much as the old, boring mall, just without the roof. Consider Maryland’s Bowie Town Center, with its typical mall layout: two anchor stores face opposite sides and are linked together by a chain of smaller boutique shops. Surrounding the complex on all sides are parking lots. With a roof, Bowie would look a lot like other dying malls in the area—perhaps as much a victim of changing tastes as of the economy.

According to the Urban Land Institute, malls need to reinvent themselves



every five to ten years to remain competitive. Some redecorate; others add another floor or anchor store; still others take off the roof. For now, shopping outdoors is a pleasant novelty, especially for people who spend most of their days in front of a computer. Landmark Mall, a dying mall in Alexandria, Virginia, shows how cyclical the tides of fashion can be. It opened in 1965 as Landmark Center, an outdoor town center complete with a New Urbanist-pleasing public plaza. But in the late 1980s, that wasn’t cool, so the mall was enclosed. Two stories were added in 1990, just in time for the zeitgeist to move on to chic new outdoor centers like Pentagon Row in nearby Arlington. The city of Alexandria now envisions a second makeover: Landmark Village, an outdoor town center complete with a New Urbanist-pleasing public plaza.

Even the more ambitious “demalled” town centers, like Reston, still

feel like, well, malls. "It's hip to be square," declares a brightly-colored poster at Rockville Town Center in Maryland. Another insists, "This place is happening"—not the kind of thing places that are actually happening have to advertise. The slogan for Reston Town Center is "what downtown was meant to be," which is not too far from Southdale's claim to be "more like downtown than downtown itself." For critics, that's exactly the problem. It's no coincidence that all the epithets that have been hurled at the mall—"ersatz," "sanitized," "antiseptic," and, worst of all, "Disneyland"—have also been lobbed at the New Urbanist town cen-

15 minutes. The open avenues of the town center create the expectation that they will keep going—just as city streets wend from neighborhood to neighborhood—but this illusion ends abruptly, usually at a parking lot. The transition could not be more sudden if you had stepped out of a climate-controlled, Muzak-infused mall. Suburban retail needs drawing power to pull in shoppers, so it has to be a destination. You won't get in your car to drive for 15 minutes for a hardware store without some specific purpose in mind, but you might to browse the latest gadgets at the Apple Store or the new Spring line at J.Crew.

Rouse observed, "is this tremendous diffusion of ownership. 150, 200 owners along the main street, 150, 200 different tenants paying rent to different owners. Nobody's in charge." In contrast, he argued, the planned shopping center would allow for the "administration of that space, a merchandising of that space." It would be a machine for shopping.

What Rouse didn't recognize is that once you decide to plan a space—rather than letting stores open and close willy-nilly, as in a city—certain immutable rules apply. A retail manager looking to maximize profits will begin winnowing out the marginal tenants (often the mom-and-pops Rouse preferred) in favor of more efficient stores with high returns—that is, the chain stores that populate every mall and town center in America. He'll create "adjacencies" with similar stores grouped together in the hopes that the same shopper who buys a skirt at Anthropologie will buy a blouse at Banana Republic next door. All the various sciences of retail will be consulted: what's the ideal placement for seating so that people will spend more time (and money) but not loiter? Which window designs are more appealing to the eye?

The enclosed shopping mall rapidly evolved away from the (partly) community-spirited plans of men like James Rouse. There is every reason to think that town centers will follow the same trajectory. These are retail environments, after all, with a business logic that overrides the cultural preferences of their planners. No planned development will mimic the organic life of cities or small towns. Across the suburbs of America, the mall is dying, only to be reborn as yet another mall—with or without the roof. ■

Cheryl Miller is the editor of Doublethink magazine.

NO MATTER WHAT IS INTENDED—A "SUBURBAN DOWNTOWN," A RETROFITTED TOWN CENTER—YOUR "NOT-A-MALL" WILL ALWAYS END UP A MALL.

ters. (Though James Rouse, for one, considered Disneyland no less than the "greatest piece of urban design in the United States today.") The mall, critics claimed, was a hermetically-sealed playground for the upper- and middle-classes, who want the pleasures of urban life but not city grit. Today critics say the same about town centers, such as this, from a blog post about Reston Town Center: "[It's] a place where people with money can gather to spend it, pretending they live somewhere much more exciting, much more vibrant than the suburb they actually call home."

Part of the problem for the malls and their town-center descendents is demographic. Suburbs don't have the density to support the varied merchants—the local hardware shop, the piano teacher, the trendy fashion boutique—that make city streets so interesting. Most town centers are tiny—even at a leisurely stroll, you can walk the entirety of Rockville Town Square's public space in

But there's something more involved here. Malls, like town centers, are not just random agglomerations of stores like the old downtown or Main Street. They've been planned. Like the mall builders of yesterday, the New Urbanists tout the enlightened planner's ability to forestall bad outcomes, like city blight or suburban sprawl. Yet the degree of control such planning entails also creates an atmosphere that feels contrived—one lacking the messy but redeeming randomness of Main Street. Centralization leads to standardization, with the result that many town centers seem stamped out of the same mold in some far-off corporate headquarters.

The mall may be planning's single greatest accomplishment: no matter what is intended—"a community lifestyle center," a "suburban downtown," a retrofitted town center—your "not-a-mall" will always end up a mall. "A retail center in the conventional structure of the American city," James

Right Life

Before William F. Buckley Jr. shaped American conservatism, the Mexican frontier shaped his father's creed.

By Reid Buckley

FATHER'S FIRST MEETING with Pancho Villa took place when he was riding a railroad train on a mission to deliver the payroll of a big U.S. company. Dust, coal smoke, and cinders blew in through the open windows, stinging eyes and covering the passengers. Pancho Villa had been regularly raiding and robbing and killing in the area, causing Father to wonder where he could hide the payroll should Villa, exalted by revolution to the status of patriot, have gotten wind of the loot. This was in the form of gold coins, rolled tightly in paper. After thinking hard on the problem, Father got up from his seat and, heavy satchel in hand, walked toward the back of the car, where the evil-smelling men's room was located.

Satisfying himself that the chamber was empty, he began dropping the rolls of coins one by one into the wide, dish-shaped mouths—stained with spittle and tobacco juice, never mind—and down the hollow tubes of their stands. Should Villa's brigands board and search the train, surely they would never think of the cuspidors.

Satisfied with his stratagem, he washed his hands and took his seat on the aisle. He had fallen half asleep when shots rang out, people screamed, and the thundering of horses' hooves burst upon his ears. The locomotive's brakes screeched and sizzled with a series of jolting stops that knocked people half out of their seats.

In poured the bandits, Villa at their head, pistols smoking, demanding wal-

lets, gold watches, women's cameos and hat pins. "Where is it?" demanded Villa. He turned on the terrified conductor, who was dragged toward him by two bandits. He drew his pistol, placing its long barrel flat against the poor man's brow.

"We know the gold is on this train. Be quick, tell me, or you are a dead man."

As the conductor pleaded ignorance, there came a shout from the back of the car, and bandits burst from the men's room, declaring that they had found the gold. At this, Villa raised the pistol, cocking the hammer, pointing it at the conductor's skull. But Father called out in a loud voice, in Spanish, "Do not hurt that man. I hid the gold. He knew nothing about it."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Guillermo Buckley. I was bringing the payroll for Company X, and I hid it without this man's knowledge."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," the conductor cried at these words, writhing on the floor.

"Shut up, you disgusting worm," said Villa. "I am going to shoot you anyhow." The conductor began begging for pity. Father came within a few feet of Villa: "I know you won't shoot that miserable man."

"Who are you to say that, *Ojos Azules* [blue eyes]? You will be fortunate if I do not kill you, too."

"Because you are too great a man to shoot a wretch like this conductor. Pancho Villa has become famous in Mexico. Children all over the country are being taught to respect and revere his name. Pancho Villa stands for justice

to the poor. You would never waste your reputation on such a wretch as this."

Villa swelled visibly with gratification as Father continued extolling his reputation and began glancing down at the conductor benevolently.

"Get up," he said at last. "Don't grovel. I have no intention of hurting you."

"Are we through here, *caballeros*?" he shouted to his men, who indicated that they had pried the last gold tooth out of the last mouth. "Good. And you, Guillermo Buckley, come see me at a better time. I respect courage."

The young Texan was nothing if not brave. Starting from scratch, using his lively imagination and happily accepting risk, Will Buckley had made a name for himself and had attracted to his side lifelong friends, Mexican and American. He was incorruptible and outspoken and did not mind angering people who were neither. He had been threatened with death and expulsion and had avoided both, refusing to change his ways or moderate his opinions. He had been abducted by bandits and escaped. He had founded Pantepec, the company that he would eventually ride to great riches.

He had discovered oil, not yet the black gold itself, but the lure and excitement. He had been appointed counsel for the Mexican government to the ABC Conference. He had exposed himself to the fire of Mexican snipers to save U.S. Marines and sailors from being shot. He had refused the civil governorship of Veracruz and watched U.S. gunboats weigh anchor after six desultory months in the

harbor, bearing away General Funston and 5,000 troops, who had accomplished an obnoxious mission ordered by an erratic old fuddy-duddy of a U.S. president. Mexico continued in a state of turmoil, but this was a land of opportunity for a person willing to work hard and who possessed the necessary grit.

These experiences shaped my father's character and beliefs and indelibly stamped the attitudes and political inclinations of his children. His revolutionary Mexico was a lawless mess in which the norms of society had disintegrated and the lowest human passions were rampant, half the nation living in a state of fear and exposed to the most brutal oppression. Hence, we learned:

- 1. Government is necessary. Its function is to prevent anarchy and antisocial tendencies. Government exists to defend the society against enemies abroad, to protect liberties at home, and, when necessary, to impose order.**

The arteriosclerotic Porfirio Díaz regime accomplished some of these objectives, but at the expense of liberty and democracy and in service of an arrogant plutocracy. Mexico's subsequent revolutionary regimes accomplished almost nothing other than to deceive the people, fuel chaos, corrupt society further, and condemn the pitiable people to a decade of blood-letting, which was followed by seven decades of exploitation, peculation, embezzlement, robbery, and political impotence.

Long before his years in Mexico, my father knew that:

- 2. Government is always dangerous.**

Every schoolchild in the Southwest had had drilled into him that government, like fire, is a wonderful servant but a fearful master. In those days, even in such a remote corner as San Diego, Texas, Americans were instructed in their heritage. They committed to memory the Declaration of Independence and at least the Preamble of the Constitution. They could quote the Bill of Rights. When they grew old enough, they studied the *Federalist Papers* and were familiar with the opinions and statements of the founders, whose counsels they took seriously.

Schoolchildren still receive instruction in the charters of their founding, but one senses with a lot less reverence. They may be more likely to hear about raunchy Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings than about his sage warning that a government possessing the power to do something for its citizens possesses the power to do something to them.

This maxim wasn't deprecated when our father was a child, and experience confirmed it. In Mexico, the post-Díaz revolutionary regimes all promised to endow Mexico with prosperity as well as egalitarian justice, neither of which goals is within the capacity or proper to the function of government. Hence:

- 3. Citizens of a republic must make do without government whenever possible.**

Back then, in the United States, politicians of whatever tint paid homage to a "rugged individualism" that is regularly mocked by the media today. Our father called it character. His first employer was, by his account, "crooked," and when he quit the man's firm, having earned his enmity, he did not find work for a year, which must have been a desperate 12 months for the young adventurer with almost no social, business, or political connections.

The West, though acknowledging the value of an honest sheriff—of law and order—was natively distrustful of government. This was a political wisdom natural to Will Buckley. Our father learned from his father, and the wisdom was reinforced by his experience in Mexico, that:

- 4. Government, unless bound strictly by laws, unless kept humble, contains within it an ever immanent menace of despotism, often accompanied by grandiose proclamations that disguise naked ambition.**

The New Deal. The Fair Deal. The Great Society. Compassionate conservatism. In Mexico, the revolution fed fat on its promises to the poor, to which all the revolutionary leaders, to some degree with the honorable exception of Pancho Villa, were faithless. Drummed into our father by extrapolation from the Mexican experience was that:

- 5. Citizens must keep government disciplined within constitutional limits lest it threaten the freedom and security of the people it was created to protect.**

From what our sire learned of the Juárez regime, and of the Díaz regime personally experienced, he culled that the tendency of government is always to expand its power, and that the tendency of strong men is always to arrogate to themselves more authority. This tendency may be benevolent, the strong

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man may be bursting with goodwill, but it is subversive of the people's rights. Concentration of power in the center is the historical dynamic of all governments and all strong men, without exception. And once powers are surrendered, they are rarely, if ever, recovered.

6. The natural dynamic of government is to absorb power at the expense of the citizens, usurping both the independence and the social responsibilities that must be expected of citizens if a republic is to work.

Big government is always overbearing. It weakens the populace by assuming responsibilities properly charged to the individual—their health and welfare—and invites corruption of all kinds.

7. Corruption is a pathological condition of big government, not accidental. Corruption under the aegis of big government pervades society and infects every citizen with disrespect for truth and with a weakness for falsehood.

Father detested lies. I don't think any peccadillo among his children aggravated him more. And one fully understands why. Lying is moral cowardice. A national fault of Mexicans, at least since the revolutionary period, is the incapacity to answer truly. Ask a humble Mexican if it is raining outside, and he will answer not necessarily or even, though rain may be hammering against the window panes, that it is sunny. He does not want to be held responsible. If the irate policeman charges you with speeding, deny it. Deny anything with which you may be charged by anyone in authority, even though you were so fast that you slammed into the cop's rear bumper.

The truth Mexicans tribally know not. The truth will not set them free; it will get them into trouble. This is the inheritance of revolution coupled with

increasingly despotic government. The truth could get one shot.

A Mexican child is taught today to revere the revolutionary leaders who were patently crooks and murderers, who lied to the people time and again. Two full generations of Mexicans have grown up under the lies sown by big government and its minions, and they have been corrupted.

8. Government is by its very nature inefficient.

Our father was able to observe this firsthand in every business activity in which he was engaged in Mexico. Nothing worked—the police, system of justice, sanitation, or mail. Our father would have blinked his blue eyes in amazement at the astonishment of the American public at the bumbling response of local, state, and federal governments in the Hurricane Katrina disaster. A Third World response,

THOUGH IN THE 21ST CENTURY WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO AVOID GOVERNMENT ENCROACHMENT IN ALL RESPECTS, WE MUST REMEMBER TO DESPISE IT.

shouted many, to which the answer is, just so, and the more responsibilities we saddle the federal government with, the more Third World it will get.

Bureaucracies are hostile to efficiency, which, if practiced, will put them out of business. When two huge government agencies, the CIA and the FBI, failed to warn us about Sept. 11, what did we do? We instituted a super intelligence agency on top of the other two. This is a peculiar form of American madness, which supposes that bigger in government is better, whereas all history is a lesson to the contrary.

Moreover, the more powers that are invested in government, and the more powers that are wielded by government, the less well does government discharge its primary responsibilities, which are (1) defense of the commonweal, (2) pro-

tection of the rights of citizens, and (3) support of just order.

9. When permitted, government encroaches on individual responsibilities and freedom, and the succeeding generations are successively less free.

My father was freer than his children, as he remarked to me a few days before he died. Lincoln suspended habeas corpus. We got that back. But will we ever again board a plane without being submitted to the indignities of security lines made excessively insupportable thanks to the ideological idiocy that insists my snow-haired, 85-year-old sister with two hip transplants be held under the same suspicion as the swarthy 20-year-old with shifty eyes, a pilot's license, and an unpronounceable name beginning al-Fatah Something?

Though in the 21st century we may

not be able to avoid government encroachment in all respects, we must remember to despise it. Father, in revolutionary Mexico, lived in a society where freedom of movement, of action, and of conscience were severely curtailed. Education was run by the militantly secularist state. He knew how easily cherished liberties and human dignity can slip through the fingers, and how vigilant a people must be to preserve them.

10. Political rhetoric is the enemy of democratic government. It is the enemy of truth.

Father learned this in Mexico, too, from the several high-flown proclamations that were issued by one revolutionary brigand after another, which may have had the virtue of emotional sincerity but were deceptions where they were not, in

their militant Marxist secularism, malign. Anyone living in Mexico during those times would have agreed that wisdom and reality are not supplanted by good intentions, even assuming that these are genuine, which in politics is rare and in Mexico was nonexistent. That wisdom tells us:

11. Not all peoples are able to bear the burden of democracy.

Some societies contain within them destructive ideologies—fascism in Germany, communism in Russia, Islamic terrorism all over the Middle East, or, as in Mexico, a history of autocratic rule and a temperamental affinity for anarchy and banditry.

That not every nation easily takes to democracy is a historical fact the denial of which is ignorant, panglossian, or stupid. In order to fortify civil peace, avoid anarchy, preclude terror, contain theft, and secure individuals in their most basic human rights, some peoples under some circumstances require rule by a strong man.

Authoritarian rule is not desirable. It is in almost every instance detestable and is always fraught with abuse of basic human dignities and tends always toward tyranny. But it is crassly self-righteous, vainglorious, and impractical to oppose it everywhere that we Americans encounter it. Weaning a society from the habit of authoritarian rule is the most dicey of political adventures. People can be bought. People accustom themselves to injustice.

12. Americans should stay clear of foreign entanglements.

Our sire would have been inclined to this attitude from Washington's Farewell Address, but it was in Mexico that he was confirmed in his isolationism.

Americans tend to be well-meaning democratic ideologues who wish to impose their principles of self-govern-

ment on nations whose societies either are not ready for self-government or are outright hostile to it. To make matters worse, Americans are often ignorant and intolerant of the customs and history of other lands, and display themselves in foreign affairs most often as hopelessly provincial. Further, lurking in the American character is an unfortunate universalist reformism deriving from Calvinist intolerance. It's a handsome paradox: the more secular we become as a nation, the more Americans desire to establish the city of God on earth.

After their initial encounter, Will Buckley's future relations with the hero of the revolution would not be cordial. One afternoon, in the early 1950s, when Father was presumably dying, his friend Cecilio Velasco took me aside and described their last meeting.

Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, riding at the head of 50,000 troops, took Mexico City of Dec. 4, 1914, and met that evening to celebrate in the floating gardens of Xochimilco. A banquet had been prepared. Villa and Zapata were heroes, mind neither liked or trusted the other. They were political rivals. Pancho Villa was, besides, envious of the slim physique of this fellow from the no-account hamlet of Anenecuilco in the remote southern latitudes of Mexico, and of Zapata's fame as a horseman. Everybody was joking and drinking—except Pancho Villa, who never touched a drop—but every man at the table had his pistol in front of him, by his plate. It was into this jolly gathering that Father introduced himself.

He was mad, truly angry, and, to a self-imperiling degree, out of control. Velasco told me that they had been having trouble with drunken Villa guerrillas, who were raiding property that Father owned—stealing, molesting women, frightening children. Father, disregarding his customary prudence, confronted Pancho Villa at his first opportunity. He walked to the head table, where Villa was pretend-

ing to be affable to Zapata.

Villa glanced up, "Ah, Señor Ojos Azules, what brings you here? What can I do for you?"

"You can keep you men off my property," Father answered.

Villa, Señor Velasco told me, smiled, but his eyes flicked toward Zapata, whose eyebrows were cocked. What—Pancho Villa was asking himself—would Zapata be thinking of the presumptuous attitude by a gringo?

"And why should I do that, Guillermo Buckley?"

Here I do not credit my memory. Yet sticking to it like a cocklebur is that Father answered: "Because the next time one of your men puts his foot on my property, he will be shot."

I blush. This is (a) too melodramatic for our father to have uttered, out of character entirely; (b) too threatening, and thus foolish. Yet he answered something—whatever his actual words were, they were firm enough—for Pancho Villa's cronies to place their hands on their pistols, gazing at their chief.

Then Pancho Villa laughed, "My men won't be bothering you, Señor Ojos Azules, I promise you. Come see me sometime." Father turned and without a word walked back between long tables containing Villa and Zapata *guerreros*.

"He could have been shot at any moment," Velasco said to me emphatically. "Villa was always unpredictable. But we never again had trouble with his bandits." On some level, these very different men—both of whom despised cowardice and admired courage—understood each other. ■

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Death Throws

The demise of sports journalism

By A.G. Gancarski

GRANTLAND RICE'S famed paragraph is still cited as a model of the sports-writer's art:

Outlined against a blue, gray October sky the Four Horsemen rode again. In dramatic lore they are known as famine, pestilence, destruction and death. These are only aliases. Their real names are: Stuhldreher, Miller, Crowley and Layden. They formed the crest of the South Bend cyclone before which another fighting Army team was swept over the precipice at the Polo Grounds this afternoon as 55,000 spectators peered down upon the bewildering panorama spread out upon the green plain below.

That heroic prose bears little relation to today's product—clipped, commercialized, forgettable.

Faded are the days when the four horsemen of sports journalism—Ring Lardner, Red Smith, Jimmy Cannon, and Rice himself—rode triumphant through a more colorful (and profitable) era. A recent article in the *New York Observer* noted, with regard to *New York Times* columnist Harvey Araton moving from the sports desk he'd manned for decades to feature writing: “[T]wo years ago, *The Times* had five sports columnists. With Mr. Araton gone, there are two. And there will be no replacements.”

Instead, the *Times* will require more analysis from its beat writers, who will use fly-by-night Twitter to provide what little insight the form allows. No room for extended metaphors there. In the age of 140-character limits, that bit about

“famine, pestilence, destruction and death” seems superfluous and writerly.

As the *Times* comes to terms with the reality that serious sportswriting is little more than a loss leader to the parent corporation, the situation is even more dire in small markets, where local papers stagger toward insolvency, their business models as outmoded as maps of the Soviet Union. In Jacksonville, where I have a weekly sports column, the situation is grim—and all too typical.

Two decades ago, the city boasted two dailies: the morning *Florida Times-Union* and the afternoon *Jacksonville Journal*. The latter was bought by the *Times-Union* in the late 1980s, and the decline in quality has been a constant for two decades. Their coverage of Jacksonville's one major sports team—the NFL Jaguars—is so uncritical it might as well bear the team's logo.

Back in the day, if something caught in Jimmy Cannon's craw, it would be printed in the next edition. Now that's not possible. The sports world has turned exquisitely corporate, with all sorts of rules—written and unwritten—governing what journalists may not say. Go too far, and lose your press credentials.

To a certain extent, local sports reporting has been replaced by national media. Thirty years ago, around the time of Carter's malaise speech, another malady settled upon sports-loving Americans in the form of ESPN. Its unparalleled newsgathering operation and seemingly limitless programming options at a time when its primary competition was ABC's “Wide World Of Sports” made it a national fixture.

To be fair, ESPN was not solely a negative development: it showcased underappreciated niche sports and, compared to the fluffy five-minute sports segments on local newscasts, “Sportscenter” seemed like a smorgasbord of quality. But from Keith Olbermann's vamping to the superannuated street slang of Stuart Scott, ESPN's flagship program has lowered its standards every year. Its greatest compromise: ignoring the darkest scandal in modern sports, Major League Baseball's use of roided-out sluggers while MLB was pressuring municipalities across the country to build new stadiums. ESPN sold these boondoggles as revenue-enhancement schemes. That worked well enough—until the credit bubble popped.

The new stadiums were erected to counteract lackluster attendance, a persistent plague of the game. Red Smith detailed the problem in a 1956 article in *Baseball Digest*:

Since the beginning of memory, deep thinkers have sought explanations for the decline in baseball's popularity. First it was the mass production of automobiles, then radio ... then the movement of urban populations into suburbia and exurbia; then decrepit parks and lack of parking space; then television; and of course, there's always been weather.

One key difference between the golden age and the current one: back then, the journalist functioned as a critical observer of the process, not some cheerleader repeating schlocky phrases like “chicks dig the long ball” as ESPNites

did during the New Economy-driven boom.

In better times, the journalist was not simply a cog in the marketing machine; he functioned as an interpreter of the poetry of the game. As Smith wrote so evocatively in his 1951 piece about the Giants winning the pennant:

From center field comes burst upon burst of cheering. Pennants are waving, uplifted fists are brandished, hats are flying. Again and again, the dark clubhouse windows blaze with the light of photographers' flash bulbs. Here comes that same drunk out of the mob, back across the green turf to the infield. Coat tails flying, he runs the bases, slides into third. Nobody bothers him now. And the story remains to be told, the story of how the Giants won the 1951 pennant in the National League. ... The tale of their barreling run through August and September and into October. ... On the final day of the season when they won the championship and started home with it from Boston, to hear on the train how the dead, defeated Dodgers had risen from the ashes in the Philadelphia twilight. ... Oh, why bother?

Smith would have grimaced at how it all turned out. Go to a game in Pittsburgh on any given night and see 40,000 empty seats. But who cares now? The stadiums have been built and the guys lauded at the height of the roidball era have been divested of the heroism ascribed to them when they were needed to fuel MLB's last great infrastructure project. Naturally, ESPN said nothing. They are disinclined to vivisect the golden goose.

To be sure, there are hotly debated issues on the network, most notably, on "Pardon the Interruption," where two old men shout at each other "Hardball"-style for half an hour everyday. They make bur-

lesque the ersatz debates while avoiding discussion of thorny issues that might impact the network's bottom line. Today's journalists seem all too suited to PTI's fake-outrage format, better shouters than scribes. Only on the "Outside The Lines" series, a rare bastion of civilized discussion, do we see a deviation.

The phony dust-ups do have certain utility, such as discouraging people from questioning the mechanics of the games they watch. For all the money bet on pro games, and all the shouting matches on the network, there is virtually no discussion of pointspreads. So when a suspicious play affects the spread or the over/under line, no mention is made of the unhappy "accident" that just happens to affect millions of dollars of wagers.

ESPN avoids those issues. What it does feature is a cloying brand of personal narrative, epitomized by the work of Rick Reilly, the former *Sports Illustrated* golden boy. Reilly was recently criticized for plagiarizing a memorably mediocre column by his ESPN colleague Bill Simmons on when it is acceptable for fans to abandon their teams. Regrettably, Simmons is one of those sportswriters never seen in the press box, opting instead to write about television sports and '80s teen movies. Ironical that one of these guys would be busted for copycatting, given that their camp self-regard would make any of the old greats reach for the well-worn flask in his jacket pocket.

Some exemplars of the old craft still exist. Until recently, Paul "Dr. Z" Zimmerman of *Sports Illustrated* was a great example. His stock in trade was nuts and bolts analysis of football, with a focus on minutiae like offensive line play. Dr. Z was also known for writing a yearly round-up of NFL teams that would obliterate the showier guys while celebrating some of the lesser-known talents. About a year ago, he suffered a stroke that effectively ended his writing

career. But even before that there were rumors that *SI* wanted to put the old warhorse out to pasture. The sense was that his material was too esoteric for today's sports fan, who would rather yell about the game than understand it.

A career like Dr. Z's—decades long at the same magazine—is less possible now. Part of it is that journalists aren't just journalists anymore. To maintain viability, they have to diversify. Podcasts, television appearances, radio slots, while enticing, serve as distractions from the crafting of language previous generations of sports journalists took as a given. Once upon a time, the bylined article was the journalist's sole connection to the world. Now even those who are unceremoniously dismissed, like Chicago controversialist Jay Mariotti, manage to maintain their television sinecures even while they lack print-press credentials.

Newspapers simply aren't going to invest resources into developing young columnists who will just leave for greener pastures. Yes, there are beat writers, but they don't write in color or even report non-official fact. An NFL beat guy I know routinely talks about things he hears from assistant coaches, but the most interesting stuff can't be put into print without compromising relationships. It comes out on the slant, if at all.

Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect that sports journalism would do anything but devolve, given the deterioration of the larger culture—a consistent embrace of luridness over substance. The new stadiums built in the last 15 years, recall, were intended as entertainment palaces, places where the game on the field would be incidental to the many family-fun activities. Mass-media sports journalism, in large part, has just mirrored and catered to that changed aesthetic. ■

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Arts & Letters

BOOKS

[*A Bubble in Time: America During the Interwar Years, 1989-2001*, William O'Neill, Ivan R. Dee, 448 pages]

An Era About Nothing

By Leon Hadar

I EXPECTED A BOOK called “America During the Interwar Years” to be about Herbert Hoover and FDR, the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, the Roaring Twenties and the radio as a new mass medium, the Scopes and Leopold-Loeb trials—aka the trials of the century—and about Tarzan the Ape Man.

I must be getting old(er), because I never imagined that someone would actually write a broad and ambitious account of America in the “interwar years” of 1989 to 2001, a time that for me does not fall under the rubric of history—more like a heading on my résumé. So I did not anticipate that I would be reading about George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, the dot-com boom and the stock market crash of 2000, Tabloid Nation and cable television news, Monica Lewinsky and the O.J. Simpson trial—aka the trial of the century—and about Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

As a journalist and scholar based in Washington during those not-so-distant interwar years, however, I have written

a great deal about what many refer to, appropriately or not, as the Age of Clinton, the period that William L. O'Neill, a professor emeritus of history at Rutgers University, has chronicled in *A Bubble in Time*. I assumed that my being, to borrow the title of Dean Acheson's autobiography, “present at the creation” (or in this case, also a lot of the destruction) explained why the details in this book felt so familiar—the main and lesser characters, the many juicy anecdotes, even the political slang (“Troopergate”) or the euphemisms (“budget train wreck” to refer to when Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill could not reconcile their differences).

But after scanning the endnotes and not-so-long bibliography, I realized why reading this work reminded me of listening to my dear late grandfather recalling his heroic exploits during “the war” for the thousandth time. It is not that I have been there, done that; rather that I have read that, watched that. (These days we might add “browsed that.”) It seems that O'Neill has read or watched—and more important, relied on, quoted from, and referred to—exactly the same newspapers, magazines, books, television shows, and films that I read or watched during those years.

The book includes quotes from and references to all the usual suspects, most of whom are still alive: Joe Klein, Maureen Dowd, Frank Rich, and Dinesh D'Souza, among others. (For some reason, globalization guru Tom Friedman doesn't make the list.) O'Neill contextualizes and deconstructs these commentators' words of wisdom. He agrees, for instance, with Klein, the veteran Clinton watcher and author of *Primary*

Colors, whose main characters are based on Bill and Hillary, when the columnist praises Clinton “for the skill and persistence with which he promoted the well-being of women, minorities, and the poor.” But he disagrees with him on Clinton's effect on the Democratic Party. (“The New Democracy and triangulation worked for Clinton personally but hurt the party.”) Memories, like the pundits on my mind ...

Not that there is anything wrong with sharing the same associative universe and misty, water-colored memories of the 1990s with another political junkie who is very perceptive. O'Neill applies an understated sense of humor and irony to connect the many dots in his narrative. After describing in detail the so-called grade inflation rampant in academia in the 1990s—and presumably still a problem—O'Neill turns his attention to his assessment of Clinton, whom he describes as a “better than average president,” adding, “perhaps someday historians, looking over the bloody wasteland of [George W.] Bush's failure, will raise Clinton from C+ to a B-. Since context is so important, that would not amount to grade inflation.” Now that is clever, and there are many similar sarcastic touches in the book.

The structure of O'Neill's storyline is quite simple. We start our walk down memory lane with a chapter about George H.W. Bush, followed by the discussion of the first Gulf War, and then an overview of the 1992 presidential election. O'Neill devotes two chapters to the two terms of Clinton's presidency. Then there are separate sections about the O.J. Simpson trial and the rise of PC culture—that's “politically correct,” not “personal

computer”—the “sexualization” of American culture, and the depressing condition of American higher education. In between, the author inserts three shorter “interludes” including one about Alan Greenspan with a not very original title, “The God That Failed” and another about the popular TV series “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” which O’Neill considers to be “the most complex and original show introduced in the 1990’s.” He praises “its wit, cleverness, originality, intricate plot and sly references.” I was more of a “Seinfeld” fan, a show “about nothing” that kind of summed up the Clinton Age. I never watched “Buffy,” so I am not sure whether she deserves this adulation. But then, unlike the former Fed chairman, at least Buffy did not slaughter our wealth.

Indeed, like Andrew Lloyd Webber, that great cultural icon of the 1980s and 1990s, O’Neill helps us “smile at the old days.” He lets the memory live again. If you had fallen into coma when the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989 and woke-up on 9/11, this book would probably be an informative and lively guide to what you had missed (or not), including the birth of SUV’s, DVD’s and cell phones—a kind of “America in the 1990s for Beginners.” As O’Neill admits in an early chapter, the “book is primarily a narrative history,” or an “informal” history, and it does not introduce us to a great theory that explains what it all meant. O’Neill is not an apolitical historian, however. His thinking is characterized by what could be described as a “radical centrism.” He colors his exposition and provides us, if not with a grand theory, with a thesis or a set of intertwining theses that seem relevant in the Age of Obama—not to mention our just concluded journey to hell on earth, which is how O’Neill seems to regard the sordid Bush-Cheney interval.

The 1990s, says O’Neill, will be recalled as “a happier and more prosperous age unmarred by terrorist attacks, long inconclusive struggles abroad, contempt for human and individual rights at home, botched disaster-recovery attempts, and a government whose arrogance was exceeded only by its ineptitude.” Hence,

compared to the presidency of Bush II, the administrations of Bush I and Clinton seem in retrospect “like a miracle of sanity and good leadership.” In addition to being characterized by peace and eventually widespread prosperity, the 1990s also marked a period of “freedom from fear,” a time after the end of the Cold War when people felt it safe to assume that “the world would not be sucked into fiery oblivion.” Since 9/11, Americans have not only entertained legitimate concerns about further terrorist attacks, but also suffered from “relentless fear-mongering by the Bush Administration [that] has frightened people while the administration’s own actions have greatly increased the amount of terrorism in the world,” which explains why today the 1990s look like a “bubble in time,” suspended between the Cold War and the War on Terror.

According to O’Neill, one of the major “missed opportunities” of this “decade of lost chances” was the “painfully bun-

more than 50 percent of the entire federal budget for fiscal year 2009 went to cover the many military-related expenditures: the costs of fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, operating the intelligence services, homeland security, veteran affairs, etc. O’Neill blames the failure to conduct a serious debate over defense spending in the aftermath of the Cold War on political pressure from the military and the national-defense establishment, which meant that, after the trauma of 9/11, efforts to control spending became almost hopeless.

But O’Neill seems to disregard another and perhaps more crucial reason why that post-Cold War debate on defense spending did not take place, which was the failure to conduct a broader debate on America’s role in the world in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. In fact, American foreign-policy goals seemed to expand at a time when Washington was not facing strong resistance from a global challenger. Influenced

O’NEILL BLAMES THE FAILURE TO CONDUCT A SERIOUS DEBATE OVER DEFENSE SPENDING IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE COLD WAR ON POLITICAL PRESSURE FROM THE MILITARY AND THE NATIONAL-DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT.

gled” attempt at some kind of universal health insurance in 1993. He blames that on the Clinton administration’s “clumsiness and inexperience,” as well as on the relentless lobbying of the health-insurance industry and the failure of congressional Democrats to rise to the occasion.

Even more troubling, from O’Neill’s perspective, was another missed opportunity, the absolute refusal of the political class to reform the military so as to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War world. Modest cuts were made under Bush I, but the “overwhelming power of the military-industrial complex that President Eisenhower warned about long ago soon reversed the process, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 led to an orgy of defense spending that has become astronomical.” Indeed, according to some of the estimates cited by O’Neill,

by Washington bureaucrats, interest groups, and the rest of the foreign-policy establishment, the U.S. attempted to extend NATO to Russia’s border; to establish a hegemonic role in the Middle East; to launch humanitarian interventions here, there, and everywhere; and to export democracy worldwide. These costly policies created the conditions for U.S. intervention in the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia as well as the two Gulf Wars, providing the rationale for increasing defense spending into the stratosphere.

Ironically, O’Neill seems to applaud the decisions to intervene on the side of the Croatians and the Bosnian Muslims against the Serbs as well as to force Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait in the first Gulf War and criticizes the Clinton administration for failing to send U.S.

troops to bring an end to the civil war in Rwanda. But without a reassessment of America's strategic role in the world and a shift to a more selective form of intervention, the old Cold War-era paradigm with its emphasis on America as a global policeman remained intact and has continued to survive and thrive, igniting more anti-Americanism around the

CLINTON COULD **ONLY WIN ELECTIONS BY "NEUTRALIZING" THE REPUBLICANS, "STEALING" THEIR ISSUES—BALANCED BUDGET, TAX CUTS, WELFARE REFORM.**

world and leading to more wars—and by extension, creating pressure to increase spending on defense.

It can be hard to locate O'Neill precisely on the American political map. At times, he sounds like a Rockefeller Republican, or in the context of his historical narrative, a Bush I Republican. Unlike political analyst and historian Kevin Phillips, the long-time basher of George Herbert Walker Bush (and the entire Bush dynasty), O'Neill portrays Bush I not as a "preppy wimp" but as a great American patriot, a war hero, a hard-working entrepreneur, and a selfless public servant whose place in history will probably turn on his role in ending the Cold War and his skillful management of the first Gulf War. Indeed, O'Neill implies that America would have been better off if the experienced and world-savvy Bush I and not the inexperienced right-wing ideologue Ronald Reagan had been selected as the Republican presidential candidate in 1980 or if this decent and honorable man had beaten the sleazy Clinton in 1992.

Perhaps today O'Neill can be tagged as an Obama Republican. While he disapproves of some aspects of the social-cultural agenda of the political Left, such as identity politics and affirmative action, he also denounces Reaganism for its notion that government is the problem and not the solution. He subscribes to a progressive axiom that aggressive action by the federal government is necessary in order to tame destructive market forces and repair social ills. Hence the notion that

Barack Obama could become another Bill Clinton would probably be bad news for him. O'Neill is very critical of Clinton for applying the strategy developed by his political adviser Dick Morris, who operated under the assumption that Clinton could only win elections by "neutralizing" the Republicans, "stealing" their issues—balanced budget, tax cuts, wel-

fare reform—while "triangulating" the Democrats by abandoning so-called "class-war dogma" and de-emphasizing traditional liberal issues such as wealth redistribution and government spending on the poor.

O'Neill suggests this Clinton-Morris strategy has hurt the long-term interests of the Democratic Party. By turning away from their core liberal ideology and trying to embrace conservative economic and cultural positions, the Democrats have been gradually transformed into a Republican Party II, and in the process they alienated lower-middle-class voters who had not benefited from the prosperity of the Clinton years. In fact, as O'Neill sees it, many of them lost their jobs as a result of the downsizing of American businesses and the decline of the manufacturing sector. Angry at Washington, Wall Street, and the "elites," many lower-middle-class voters were drawn to the populist cultural agenda of the Republicans with its emphasis on so-called traditional values, post-9/11 radical nationalism, and xenophobia.

Clinton's main asset had been the economic and political reality of the 1990s, which included the end of the Cold War, the resultant "peace dividend" at home, the opening of new markets abroad, and the lack of global challenger to the U.S. in a time of the high-tech revolution. This created the conditions for the Clinton Age economic boom, and international peace benefited many sectors and demographic groups who supported the status quo and helped elect and then re-elect Clinton.

O'Neill contends that an important feature of Clinton's success was the "evil things" that didn't happen under his watch, though they were seeded during it. "The new age of blood and iron ushered by President Bush II, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, the three men of the apocalypse," didn't come out of nowhere, he writes. "Beneath the frivolity of the Clinton years dark forces had been gathering their strength, waiting for a chance to slouch towards Bethlehem, the opportunity that 9/11 would give them." In little-read publications, think tanks, and "other shadowy venues, neoconservatives and their allies plotted to invade Iraq, alienate the rest of the world, and ruining the American economy by means of runaway spending, massive tax cuts, and lax regulation—the trifecta of looters." Or to put it differently, the many disasters of the Bush years were "incubating in the heart of Clinton's America."

O'Neill concludes his study without any reference to the outcome of the 2008 presidential election. Obama is not even mentioned in the index. But my guess is that he would urge the new Democratic occupant of the White House to resist taking Clinton's road down the political middle and accommodating Republicans. There are some signs, however, that Obama may be trying to do just that. By selecting leading Wall Street-friendly former Clintonites as his top economic advisers and choosing a veteran Republican figure as the Pentagon chief, Obama has demonstrated that, like Clinton, he has no desire to challenge the status quo in Washington, despite the fact that more and more Americans are becoming disenchanted with the political system. It would not be surprising if O'Neill's next volume of "informal" history chronicled the many disasters that incubated in the heart of Obama's America. ■

Leon Hadar is a Cato Institute research fellow in foreign-policy studies and author, most recently, of Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East.

[*Terrorism: How to Respond*,
Richard English, Oxford
University Press, 143 pages]

The Anatomy of Terror

By Michael Burleigh

RICHARD ENGLISH is a professor of politics at Queen's University, Belfast, and a capable expert on the IRA and the history of nationalism in Ireland. This background bulks large in this brief account of global terrorism, *Terrorism: How to Respond*, a thought-provoking primer for politicians seeking something to stimulate them.

English begins by having a stab at defining terrorism. He rightly thinks the word terrorism has meaning and that it is legitimate to hive off this tactic of sub-state actors from the immeasur-

ably more lethal instances history affords of terrorism by state entities, from the Jacobin massacres in the royalist Vendée in the 1790s down to the much-studied crimes of Hitler and Stalin. While English doubts there is anything so concrete as a generic terrorist, he points to certain familial resemblances, which mean that something of the maniacal glint (and comedic ineptitude) of an Andreas Baader is evident in the otherwise culturally distinctive Ramsi Yousef of al-Qaeda. According to English:

Terrorism involves heterogeneous violence used or threatened with a political aim; it can involve a variety of acts, of targets, and of actors; it possesses an important psychological dimension, producing terror or fear among a directly threatened group and also a wider implied audience in the hope of maximizing political communication and achievement; it embodies the exerting and implementing of power, and the attempted redressing of power relations; it represents a subspecies of warfare, and as such it can form part of a wider campaign of violent and non-violent attempts at political leverage.

Having thus identified the problem, he questions, and invariably incorporates, a variety of different approaches to dealing with it. His specific tack is to address terrorism as a species of warfare and politics. If I have one minor criticism to make of this method, it is that while English is correct in claiming that most terrorists are not madmen, common sense suggests that individuals can be crazy—not to speak of morally deranged—without matching any clinical definition of insanity.

The first case study in *Terrorism* is the learning experience that was once “The Troubles.” English provides a fair-minded and highly condensed history of the conflict in Northern Ireland from its reignition in the late 1960s to the present post-peace-process era. Although the IRA's long war of attrition

against the British indirectly highlighted political and social injustices that required redress, the fact is that the Provos were militarily defeated and none of their strategic objectives—notably a socialist united Ireland of 32 counties without a British presence—have been realized.

I only missed a couple of points in English's account. First, the capacity to enter into a negotiated settlement obviously hinged on the remarkable longevity of the Sinn Féin IRA leadership as manifest in the careers of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. That is not possible where governments have assassinated successive terrorist leaders, as the Israelis have done in the case of Hamas. Second, English does not address the wider ramifications of the peace process. These include the cynical marginalization of the main moderate parties, the SDLP and UUP, in favor of the DUP and Sinn Féin, or the gangster-like grip that former paramilitaries (and the likes of Continuity and Real IRA) exert over the unfortunate inhabitants of very poor Republican areas. Indeed, English's account is so fair-minded that one might easily miss the fact that IRA-Sinn Féin was one of the largest organized-crime syndicates in Europe.

English moves from Belfast to the rather different example of ethno-nationalist terrorism represented by Eta. Spain's two Basque provinces enjoy the highest degree of regional autonomy that anyone can conceive of, but a tiny violent minority is hell-bent on engaging in pinprick terrorist activities. Put crudely, Eta are on a hiding to nothing. Once the French decided not to confuse Eta with wartime French *maquisards*, the ability of Eta members to scurry back and forth to the *Pays Basques* was diminished. Spain's counterterrorism police have also been so assiduous in either covertly killing or arresting many Eta leaders that there is no coherent leadership with which to deal. Ironically, the nonviolent separatism of the Catalans poses more of a challenge to Madrid, as is evident from the recent

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decision of the Catalan authorities to mandate a mere two hours a week of Spanish language in the provinces' school system.

This slight discussion of Eta leads uneasily to a longer consideration of al-Qaeda. English perhaps neglects the degree to which this amorphous entity is a collection point for displaced men with myriad local grievances against regimes which the West opposes as well as supports, either as a hangover from the Cold War or by virtue of their oil and gas resources. Its deracinated ranks include Afghans, Algerians, Egyptians, Indonesians, Libyans, Moroccans, Palestinians, Pakistanis, Saudis, Uzbeks, and Yemenis.

The author endeavors to give a fair-minded account of the war on terror, yet there is too much here on Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo rather than any reasoned discussion about the extent to which the U.S. and its allies have contained al-Qaeda in the last eight years. It remains to be seen whether al-Qaeda will be able to branch out successfully to Mali, Mauritania, or Somalia, especially since it is increasingly likely that Osama bin Laden is dead, he being indispensable to its global franchise. Ayman al Zawahiri is too locked up in the local Egyptian struggle to replicate bin Laden's strange charismatic appeal.

In his concluding chapter, English makes a number of sensible suggestions about how we should respond to terrorism, although his "we" does not range beyond the U.S. and Britain to include various other schemes to deradicalize former jihadists. Using the Northern Ireland example, he says that we should get used to living with terrorism, or what one former Northern Ireland Secretary called "acceptable levels of violence," for the lethality of the IRA was not constant from decade to decade. All terrorism is protean. Quite rightly, English adds that intelligence-led activity is better than increasing the number of boots on the ground in problem areas, although the ability of the British state to infiltrate the IRA is bound to be greater than any Western capacity to get

inside such a clannish entity as al-Qaeda or the Af-Pak Taliban. English is also right to say that we need to adhere to our own legal precepts, not only by eschewing torture, rendition, and extra-territorial detention, but also by resisting the temptation, most wordily represented by American lawyer Phillip Bobbitt, to introduce a raft of legislation designed to anticipate a hypothetical mass-casualty atrocity.

The rest of the author's prescriptions, including hardening public spaces against attack and interdicting terrorist financing, are more or less already ongoing in most Western countries and quite a few further afield, too. What English seems to underplay is the need to construct more appealing metanarratives to counter the powerfully simplistic ones put about by the jihadists, notably their belief in atemporal Muslim victimhood at the hands of "Crusader-Zionists." Surely we have derived enough intelligence on the squalid internal dynamics of various Islamist groups to be able to play to their human weaknesses?

I also wonder about English's argument that we need to detoxify "the roots of the problem." Of course, there is not one problem, synonymous in the Islamist case with Israel and Palestine. Rather, on that front, we need to think hard about how to help manage a series of transitions from the Middle East's more or less unsavory presidential dynasties and absolute monarchs to such moderate fundamentalists and members of the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie that exist in every Arab capital. That will help address the inequitable distribution of oil and gas revenues, rampant male youth unemployment, and the unjustified status that various clerical loudmouths derive from those circumstances. Unfortunately, terrorism is merely a symptom of more tragic complexities. ■

Michael Burleigh is author of Blood and Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism and Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics from the European Dictators to al-Qaeda.

[Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda From the Philippines to Iraq, Susan Brewer, Oxford University Press, 352 pages]

Selling War

By John Schwenkler

AS DETAILS CONTINUE to emerge about the U.S. government's interference with the press and manipulation of public opinion during the Iraq War, one inevitably hears the lament that such actions are out of keeping with the tradition of American democracy. Susan Brewer's *Why America Fights* makes it clear that this is premised on a massive historical misunderstanding. From President McKinley's war for conquest in the Philippines through both of the World Wars and the costly misadventures in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq, the American government has been nothing if not interfering and manipulative in dealing with the press and the public.

The reader learns in detail the processes by which one federal administration after another has suppressed or misrepresented basic facts, stoked public fears, played to base nationalistic impulses, and gradually replaced the customary noninterventionism of Americans with a mythology of a country that must go abroad in search of democracies to promote. If the Bush administration comes off looking less deceitful than many of its predecessors, that is only because those earlier administrations were so successful in their duplicity that the public mindset Bush needed to gain support for his wars had already been well established.

Brewer begins her account in 1898 with President McKinley, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, and others selling a nakedly imperialistic power grab in the Philippine Islands as a "divine mission" to extend the benefits of civilization to our "little brown brothers." (If this sounds familiar to veterans of a more recent war, that is as it should be.) McKinley was a master manipulator of

public opinion by way of the press: he established the executive mansion as a central depot for war news, assigned a secretary to meet daily with the media, and put together a staff of dozens to monitor opinion and issue carefully timed press releases to ensure that the administration's angle would dominate the news. "Having destroyed their government," the president said, in response to critics of his plans to occupy the Philippines after the end of the Spanish-American War, "it is the duty of the American people to provide for a better one." Colonialism was equated with respect for sovereignty, war with peace, and critics of U.S. battlefield atrocities were said to "walk delicately and live in the soft places of the earth." Opponents of war had no business speaking ill of the "strong men who with blood and sweat" went about the business of spreading civilization.

With minor modifications to suit changing circumstances, subsequent presidents retained this basic framework. Woodrow Wilson's liberal internationalism "kept the world safe for democracy" even as his official Committee on Public Information interfered with media freedoms, jailed citizens who spoke out in protest, and misled the public with materials put out by its literal Madison Avenue Division of Advertising. During the buildup to the Second World War, opponents of internationalism were pegged by the Roosevelt White House as subversives and Nazi sympathizers, and once the war began the administration censored press and personal communications, used extensive polling statistics to tailor official statements and government propaganda to the shape of public opinion, and leaned heavily on radio and film to promote the right messages.

By the time of the wars in Vietnam and Iraq, state propaganda had become less overt and dissent was more openly tolerated. Yet the success of prior administrations in establishing the White House as a key media player and, more important, enshrining the idea of the U.S. military as bringer of freedom and defender of the civilized world meant that war had become a much easier sell. Brewer docu-

ments in excruciating detail the ways in which the Johnson, Nixon, and Bush II administrations routinely twisted information to suit their own ends and, when mere twisting wasn't enough, simply created the "facts" they needed. But the reality of American global dominance, and President Truman's success in defining the Cold War agenda, rendered the project of encouraging pro-war sentiments in place of noninterventionist ones largely unnecessary. Despite receiving little support from the international community, both the Iraq and Vietnam wars were initially quite popular among Americans.

It is a shame that Brewer does not similarly assess the Bush administration's promotion of the wider framework of the war on terror, which is likely to define American military affairs for decades to come, even as Iraq fades from the nation's memory. She also displays an unfortunate willingness to acquiesce in the false understanding of "patriotism" as unblinking support for one's nation's wars and fails to make a consistent distinction between governmental use of the media as a tool for outright propaganda and the recognition among self-interested filmmakers and journalists that war sells and that a few citizens are inclined to trust an excessively negative messenger. When 19th-century "yellow journalists" realized that they could sell papers by filling their pages with tales of Spanish atrocities, it was surely propaganda of a sort. But this is a different phenomenon from the creation of federal agencies designed to manipulate news accounts and win the public over.

Least satisfying of all is Brewer's claim—made in both the introduction and the conclusion, and in each case entirely without argument—that even deceitful state propaganda can be tolerable if the cause is sufficiently noble. Brewer notes at the start that she believes World War II—"a legitimate war," she calls it—fits this billing. She supplements this diagnosis with her attempt to distinguish the "censorship, exaggeration, and lies" relied on by the likes of the Bush administration from the "strategy of truth" adopted by FDR. But the facts

make it hard to sustain such an interpretation: from Brewer's own account, Roosevelt lied to the public about his intended policies as he ran for a third term in 1940, censored news reports that were deemed insufficiently optimistic, and of course sent 180,000 Japanese Americans to concentration camps. ("Pioneer communities" was the official term.) Even the truth-telling strategy Brewer champions was itself an advertising move, based on the recognition that "too much salesmanship" on the part of the Office of War might turn people off, while more "straightforward and practical" instructions on what to do and believe would "regain public confidence in official propaganda." If the cartoonish film and poster campaigns of the Wilson administration are the point of comparison, then the Iraq War's salesmen come off rather well, too. But that doesn't change the fact that in each case the public was being dishonestly sold a war by men who would barely have to sacrifice, much less fight and die, to implement their preferred policies.

These qualms aside, this is an important book. It sheds light on an aspect of U.S. political history that American citizens in general, and members of the press in particular, ought to examine more closely before being taken in again by bellicose state propaganda. The present debate over healthcare reform shows that the role of the executive branch as a de facto advertising agency is unlikely to recede, and it has become far too easy to use the authority and free airtime that come with political power as a means to manipulate public opinion on matters domestic and foreign. Obviously it is possible to imagine cases when such propaganda can be used for good rather than bad ends, but it is surely better for people to meet official publicity campaigns by residents of Pennsylvania Avenue with an instinctive mistrust. Our government's proper role is to represent the popular will, not to manipulate until it aligns with the president's agenda. ■

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[*The New American Economy: The Failure of Reaganomics and a New Way Forward*, Bruce Bartlett, Palgrave Macmillan, 272 pages]

We Are Not All Keynesians Yet

By William A. Niskanen

MOST OF BRUCE BARTLETT'S new book is an account of American macroeconomic policy from the Great Depression to today. Bartlett offers the valuable perspective of a real inside witness, having served on the staffs of several key members of Congress and as a senior policy analyst in the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. He is, moreover, a good economic historian and provides a well-documented summary of the last 80 years of American macroeconomics.

But Bartlett is not a good macroeconomic analyst, and at various points this undermines his case. His most important mistake—one made by many others—is to accept the Keynesian explanation of the Great Depression: “the Fed’s effort to expand the money supply was like pushing on a string,” he says. “Fiscal stimulus was necessary to compensate for the collapse of private spending in the economy and thereby mobilize monetary policy.”

In fact, federal expenditures increased by 47 percent from 1929 to 1933. The 46.1 percent decline in nominal Gross National Product during these years was the result of the Fed’s mistake of reducing M2, the broader money supply, by 30.9 percent at a time of substantial decline in the velocity of money, rather than any inadequate fiscal stimulus.

Economic growth was unusually high from 1933 to 1937, a consequence of a dramatic change in monetary policy that involved increasing the dollar price of gold in 1933, the implementation of deposit insurance in 1934, and a sub-

stantial increase in the money supply. Fiscal stimulus was inadequate to prevent the decline in nominal GNP from 1929 to 1933 and unnecessary to increase economic growth from 1933 to 1937.

The same Keynesian perspective leads Bartlett to endorse Obama’s 2009 fiscal stimulus plan. By the time this review is published, however, it will be clear that the initial distribution of the stimulus spending increased private savings but has had no effect on private consumption or investment through the second quarter, and that the recent recession ended long before most of the stimulus expenditures were distributed. Monetary policy was again the most effective macroeconomic policy instrument and was not dependent on a corresponding fiscal stimulus.

To his credit, Bartlett recognizes that Keynesian economics is “mainly a rationale for things that governments everywhere wanted to do anyway.” That appears to have been the guiding principle for Obama’s stimulus package: as White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel put it, “You never want a seri-

Nixon famously declared in 1971, “We are all Keynesians now.” Bartlett documents that a Keynesian perspective dominated U.S. macroeconomic policy through the 1970s and became suspect only after it failed to prevent the recessions of 1974-75 and 1980 or the rapid increase in inflation through 1980. Even in 1981, the major critics of President Reagan’s economic program claimed that his policies would lead to increased inflation and slow growth—just the opposite of what happened.

The book’s best passages are those on the conservative revolution in economic policy, probably because Bartlett was directly involved in those events. This revolution, he explains, was a combination of changing monetary policy to control demand and using marginal tax-rate cuts to increase economic growth—the first promoted by Milton Friedman, the second by Robert Mundell, both from the University of Chicago and both recipients of the Nobel Prize. By the late 1970s, their perspective was shared by many members of Congress, supported by the *Wall Street Journal*’s editorial page, and endorsed by a prospective

TO HIS CREDIT, BARTLETT RECOGNIZES THAT **KEYNESIAN ECONOMICS** IS “MAINLY A RATIONALE FOR THINGS THAT GOVERNMENTS EVERYWHERE WANTED TO DO ANYWAY.”

ous crisis to go to waste. And this crisis provides the opportunity for us to do things that you could not do before.” But *The New American Economy* goes on to claim that Keynes should be regarded as a conservative, based on Bartlett’s view that good macroeconomic policy would reduce the political demands for microeconomic policies—such as the Smoot-Hawley tariff and the National Industrial Recovery Act—that reduced the growth of output and employment. (He should also have mentioned that Keynes opened his Cambridge home to Friedrich Hayek when London was subject to German bombing during World War II.)

Liberal Democrats certainly were not alone in embracing Keynes; Richard

Republican presidential candidate. As president, Ronald Reagan gave Fed chairman Paul Volcker strong support to reduce inflation and won the approval of a divided Congress for a major reduction of income-tax rates. As a consequence, the consumer price inflation rate fell from 12.5 percent during 1980 to 3.8 percent during 1982, and economic growth was unusually strong for the remainder of the decade.

In later chapters, Bartlett summarizes how the supply-side of this revolution came apart—primarily because it promised too much. Some supply-siders claimed that tax cuts would increase output enough to avoid a reduction of tax revenues; others said that tax cuts would reduce federal spending by

“starving the beast.” These two defenses were, of course, incompatible. And, as it turns out, neither is consistent with the evidence since 1980. These perspectives led too many Republicans to be casual about the sustained political discipline necessary to control federal spending, especially during the administration of George W. Bush, and inculcated a strong party opposition to any tax increase, forgetting that Reagan approved several tax increases in the early 1980s. The monetary element in the conservative revolution in economic policy, of course, has been at least temporarily threatened by the revival of a case for fiscal stimulus in response to the financial crisis.

Bartlett goes on to address tomorrow’s economic crisis, and his arguments on this topic will probably prove to be the most controversial elements in this book. He reports that while the explicit federal debt is now about \$16 trillion, the implicit debt for Social Security and Medicare is about \$90 trillion. He concludes, “Large tax increases will be necessary to pay for all the promises that have been made. Instead of opposing them entirely, supply-siders should use their insights to design a new tax system better able to raise higher revenues at the least possible cost in terms of economic growth and political freedom.”

From there, Bartlett argues in favor of a value-added tax. But there are at least two questions that should be resolved before jumping from the awesome estimates of the U.S. federal debt to the case for an American VAT. First, what are the

comparative costs of alternative means to reduce the burden of the federal debt other than an increase in taxes of any kind? Possible measures include the deferring of the age for full retirement benefits, changing the nature of the benefits that would be acceptable to the current voting population, and adopting policies that would increase economic growth. Second, what types of taxes would be most effective in limiting the political demands for government spending? The U.S. time-series evidence suggests that government spending has been a *negative* function of the tax share of GDP, given the nature of our tax system. The cross-country evidence, however, suggests that government spending is a *positive* function of the average VAT rate. A more visible tax, such as an income-based consumption tax, is likely to lead to a lower level of government spending than a nearly invisible VAT. Such a tax may be the most efficient way to collect a given amount of fiscal revenues, but it would probably lead to a higher level of government spending.

I am prepared to accept Bartlett’s argument through to its arithmetic conclusion that “Large tax increases will be necessary to pay for all the promises that have been made.” But I want the above two issues to be addressed carefully before concluding that our future should include a VAT. One final comment: the subtitle of Bartlett’s book refers to “The Failure of Reaganomics,” but his book never makes that case. Reaganomics substantially reduced the inflation rate within two years, substantially increased the rate of economic growth for the rest of the 1980s, and set the terms for economic policy for the rest of the century. I wonder what additional evidence would be necessary to convince Bartlett to agree with me that Reaganomics was an outstanding success, even if it did not resolve all of our major economic problems. ■

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[Churchill, Paul Johnson, Viking, 192 pages]

Man of the Hour, Not the Century

By Andro Linklater

OF BOOKS ON THE LIFE of Winston Churchill there is no end. By my reckoning, this is number 1,636, and the third this summer. Next year, the 70th anniversary of Churchill’s appointment as Britain’s war leader will bring a fresh surge, including an update of Martin Gilbert’s vast, authoritative, and occasionally definitive biography. So why pause on this one?

There are two good reasons: it is short and a delight to read. A third is the author. Whether this reason is good or bad may be a matter of opinion, but that Johnson commands attention is beyond doubt. Awarding him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2006, George W. Bush described him as one of “the finest citizens the Almighty has ever produced.”

But brain-dead hyperbole misses the point about Paul Johnson. Now in his eighties, Johnson has honed his writing to a brilliant and provocative edge. Judged simply on his style as a columnist, he merits inclusion in the league of great popular essayists from William Hazlitt to H.L. Mencken. His themes are large, as some of the titles—*The History of Christianity*, *Modern Times*, *A History of the American People*—of his 40 books suggest. His powers of synthesis are formidable, and his point of view is distinct and often surprising, as in his choice of Chief Justice John C. Marshall as the most influential of the Founding Fathers. The stance is never neutral. Each stage of his long rotation from fiery socialist to crusty conservative has been recorded in a profusion of magazine articles filled with passionate conviction about the immutable correctness of his shifting position. And most betray an egotistic dazzle that infuriates or seduces.

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Here, for example, you will be told among other trivia that the 10-year-old Johnson was precociously clever at imitating Churchill's famous susurrating delivery and that the mature Johnson slept in Churchill's bed and found it very comfortable. You will also learn that it was the teenage Johnson's question, "To what do you attribute your success in life?" that prompted Churchill's memorable aphorism, "Conservation of energy. Never stand up when you can sit down, and never sit down when you can lie down."

The satirical magazine *Private Eye* used to dub Johnson "Bonkers" for the wild invective directed at whatever target he suddenly selected as evidence of the decline of Western civilization. Even he now apparently regrets the adolescent abuse hurled at many of the subjects of his *Intellectuals*. Yet Johnson finds something to admire in even the most rackety aspects of Winston Churchill's volatile career.

Born in 1874, Churchill was 65 with a long career in Parliament behind him when he became prime minister. "I was conscious of a profound sense of relief," he wrote later. "At last I had authority to give directions over the whole scene. I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial."

Some destiny, some past. It is difficult to appreciate the vitriolic dislike he had aroused up to that moment. Churchill was regarded as pushy, selfish, unreliable to the point of folly, and devoid of conscience. "Anyone can rat," he said cheerfully of his return to Conservative ranks in 1924, 20 years after leaving them to become a Liberal, "but it takes a certain ingenuity to re-rat." A year later, as chancellor of the exchequer, he decided to tie the currency to the price of gold at a catastrophically high exchange rate, destroying thousands of export businesses, throwing almost a million people out of work, and precipitating a national strike. The mistake was on a par with his insistence in 1915 that the

deadlock of trench warfare could be bypassed by an attack on Germany through the Black Sea, a strategy that resulted in a disastrous operation costing more than 200,000 casualties.

During the critical 1930s, when he was out of power, the misjudgments became more pronounced. Even Churchill's closest friends became dismayed by his intemperate hostility to any attempt to prepare for India's eventual independence. His willingness to precipitate a constitutional crisis over the abdication of the wretched Edward VIII drove them to despair. This reputation for irresponsibility and a distrust of his naked ambition for power largely explain why his warnings about German rearmament received so little parliamentary support.

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Yet he was also recognized as one of the biggest beasts in the political jungle because of his proven ability to see through immense government programs. This capacity was demonstrated repeatedly in the early part of his career when, as a minister in a reforming Liberal administration before the First World War, he helped to introduce a national system for old-age pensions in 1910, then pushed through a huge prison-reform project—"the treatment of crime and criminals," he rightly declared, "is one of the unfailing tests of the civilization of any country"—and drove forward a far-reaching overhaul of the Royal Navy. By any standards, his modernization of the fleet's aging technology was impressive, including switching its fuel from coal to oil, the introduction of wireless telegraphy and naval aviation, and the construction of the largest battleships afloat. When he took over the Ministry of Munitions in 1918, the same energies pushed production levels high enough to guarantee

Gen. Douglas Haig a surplus of every sort of armament when he launched the campaign that finally broke Germany's resistance.

After his appeasing predecessor, Neville Chamberlain, had resigned May 1940, the recognition that Churchill could shake a supine government into action did more to overcome doubts about his character than the realization that he had been right about Hitler. Even so, the appointment as prime minister of an erratic, unprincipled, attention-seeking toff locked into a 19th-century romantic conviction of the splendor of the British Empire seemed a desperate gamble. Most people from George VI down would have chosen the sanctimoniously reasonable Lord Halifax—"Lord Holy

Fox" in Churchill's jibe. No one anticipated that the new premier's defects would fit him to the hour as powerfully as his virtues.

His oratory illustrates the paradox. To someone like the sophisticated Harold Nicolson, Churchill's emotional phraseology was "ghastly," but in the summer when France fell and the Nazis controlled Europe, these words delivered in his throaty, claret-stained voice had an incomparable impact:

What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all

Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands.

There was no false comfort, only a vision of vast scope. The effect on morale could be seen in the opinion polls. From barely 50 percent, the prime minister's approval rating rose to almost 90 percent. Over the following months, when the Luftwaffe turned from its losing battle with the RAF to night-time bombing, and London, together with every major city and port in the land, was blitzed to a bonfire, the willful, damn-your-eyes pugnacity that had marred Churchill's past became the mood of the nation.

That public resolution held firm in the face of a succession of disasters, including Japan's capture of Singapore and Hong Kong and German victories in Greece, Crete, and North Africa. What sustained morale was the galvanizing energy with which Churchill drove an often recalcitrant military machine to the offensive. There were only scraps—the bombing of Germany, the defeat of Italy in the Mediterranean, a narrow superiority in the sky, a narrower one at sea—but they were enough to persuade the British to believe in the sunlit uplands.

To attack Germany, munitions were needed. Churchill made it a priority to cultivate what he later termed a "special relationship" with the United States, and with President Franklin Roosevelt in particular. Thousands of telegrams were exchanged, and the elderly Churchill traveled over 100,000 miles in freezing, unpressurized aircraft and stripped-down battleships to meet with the president on more than a dozen occasions. "No lover ever studied every whim of his mistress," he declared, "as I did those of President Roosevelt."

The rationale was obvious. From the sale in 1940 of surplus war materiel through to the \$7 billion allocation of military supplies under the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941, the United States, at the president's urging, channeled a vital torrent of armaments to Britain.

Churchill treasured the relationship as one of his great triumphs. Yet this was another miscalculation.

The decision to supply weaponry to Britain and other allies was the result not of presidential goodwill but of American strategy or, as Roosevelt bluntly told Congress in June 1941, "because it was in our own national interest and security." However much the president appreciated Churchill in person, he profoundly distrusted his imperialist outlook. The truth was made obvious at the Yalta conference in 1945. The representative of empire was left isolated as Roosevelt tried to create his own special relationship with Stalin through a policy of giving him "everything I possibly can" in the belief that "he won't try to annex anything and will work with me for a world of democracy and peace."

Folly on this scale renders Churchill's error minuscule, quite apart from it being made in the right direction. That British premiers should continue to believe in the existence of a "special relationship," on the other hand, is no more comprehensible than that they should continue to believe in the existence of Santa Claus. The hard reality, as George Washington said in his Farewell Address, is that nations have interests, not friends.

Winston Churchill's reputation continues to grow, however. His cause was good, his words memorable, his triumph lasting. All these reasons spring out from the adoring sketch in Paul Johnson's brief book. There are no dark shadows here, only the golden glow of a hero who is unfailingly wise, witty, generous, doughty, and farsighted. This characterization is too good to be true, but you read Johnson to be provoked and entertained, and on both those scores his biography, like its subject, succeeds wonderfully. ■

Andro Linklater's An Artist in Treason: the Extraordinary Double Life of James Wilkinson, Commander of the United States Army and Agent 13 in the Spanish Secret Service will be published by Bloomsbury USA in September.

No Easy Money

Continued from page 27

earned on savings accounts, Americans aren't creating pools of capital, they're paying down old debt. Much of what the government counts as savings is actually going to reduce costly debt—a rational decision when savings earn 1 percent and credit-card debt costs 18 percent.

At some point the risk of flooding the world with essentially free money will be priced into bond yields, and investors will wake up to the fact that once interest rates are effectively zero, there's no upside left in bonds' future appreciation. In fact, the specter of rising rates makes bonds a risky investment because rates and value are on a see-saw: if rates rise, the value of the bond drops. A sharp rise in rates would eviscerate the market value of all existing bonds.

With global demand for surplus capital rising just as global assets and income have dropped precipitously, it's inevitable that the demand-supply imbalance will be resolved with higher rates. The only alternative open to central planners is to print money, but doing so will not fool anyone: interest rates will still rise because free, easy money will lead to either inflation or devaluation, and the bond market is aware that there is no free lunch—not even for the dollar.

Although higher rates are presumed to spell disaster for the debt-laden U.S. economy, in which total public and private debt is already 350 percent of GDP, the plus side—rational incentives to save and invest—is rarely noted. Perhaps we should be cheering for higher interest rates as a return to sanity rather than fearing them as some sort of unnatural plague.

Just don't mention that if you're a Fed apparatchik—you might get shipped to Siberia. ■

Charles Hugh Smith writes the Of Two Minds blog (www.oftwominds.com) and a column for AOL's Daily Finance site. His latest book is Survival+: Structuring Prosperity for Yourself and the Nation.

Basque In It

I have never really given a damn about my own mongrel ethnicity—I care about place, not race—and besides, there are many mysteries to which I don't particularly

want to know the answer. I heed Dr. Zaius's advice to Charlton Heston in "Planet of the Apes": "Don't look for it, Taylor. You may not like what you find."

But when a genetically tested family member on my wife's side learned, quite to his surprise, that torrents of Basque blood course through his veins, I figured that I'd help my wife and daughter fit into their good shepherd heritage.

The first thing I did was order a bumpersticker featuring a menacing-looking Basque nationalist. Hey, Spain—hands off *Euskal Herria*!

Second thing I did was look up famous Basque-Americans. The bookends are Ted Williams and "American Idol" runner-up David Archuleta. The Armenians claim William Saroyan and Cher, so we'll call that a draw.

Third and wisest act on my Basque list was a return to the novels of Robert Laxalt, whose literary acquaintance I had made shortly before he died with his hydrophobic novella *Time of the Rabies* (2000).

Robert Laxalt (1923-2001) grew up in a Carson City hotel run by his mother while his father was off in the mountains herding sheep. As a young Nevada newspaperman, Robert refused offers to helm United Press bureaus in Los Angeles and Mexico City, for as he explained, "I was a Nevadan to the core."

In 1957, Robert published *Sweet Promised Land*, a widely praised account of his father's return to the Basque village of his youth. The book's

success set him up for a literary celebrity that fled. For Laxalt's people have never been Minority of the Month; his state's image as a desert mottled by slot machines is crass and arid. So Robert Laxalt turned his back on the Manhattan publishing world, founded the University of Nevada Press, and wrote histories of Nevada, novels of ranch life, family portraits, and clear-eyed affectionate depictions of his neighbors, from Basque shepherders to the lost souls of Las Vegas.

One Laxalt son stayed west, but another flew east: Robert's brother Paul, who after serving as governor of Nevada did two terms in the U.S. Senate.

Robert fictionalized his brother's rise in *The Governor's Mansion* (1994), in which Leon Indart, the honest but canny son of a Basque family very much resembling the Laxalts, is elected governor of Nevada. (Typically, Leon, after having lunch with a mob hitman named "Icepick Willie," pronounces him "the nicest man" who "wants to help.") Leon tolerates organized crime in Las Vegas because "these are our people and gambling is what keeps the state alive." *The Governor's Mansion* is one of the very few political novels in which a conservative Republican is presented sympathetically, if unheroically.

A Carson City mintmark is a rarity to be desired, but the real Leon Indart must have mistranslated it as Crystal City. For upon retiring from the Senate, Paul Laxalt did not return home to Nevada,

but instead traded on his name as a Washington lobbyist. Prostitution is legal in Nevada but mandatory in D.C.

I have no scunner against Paul Laxalt, Reagan confidant and a well-liked senator, but I measure such men against the standard of my late friend and landsman Barber Conable, who for two decades represented us in the House with an integrity and placefulness that almost makes me believe that Madison's design once had a chance of succeeding. Upon his retirement, Mr. Conable was offered the usual 30 (million) pieces of silver to betray his homefolks and stay on as a D.C. lobbyist, but as he once told me, "There's nothing deader than a dead politician. I recall my friends Wilbur Mills and Al Ullman coming to lobby me after they had gone to their rewards one way or another, and I would duck into doorways to avoid them because they would be asking for things that I knew they didn't believe in. They were pure mercenaries." So Conable came home. Most don't. Whoring out is far more lucrative.

Robert Laxalt wrote of a recurring dream in which his fictive counterpart returns to Carson City and searches, vainly, for the house in which he grew up. "No house of that name was ever here," an old man tells him. "No one by that name ever lived here."

I don't suppose lobbyists are troubled by such dreams.

One Laxalt brother's name decorates public buildings in the Nevada he long ago abandoned, but it is the other brother, the one who stayed home, whose name is written in the desert sands and aspen groves of the Silver State. Wanna wager whose Nevada lasts longer? ■



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